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VOLUME I

LANGUAGE AND MAGIC

— Studies in the Magical Function of Speech —

BY

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## PREFACE

The present volume is the first to appear of a new series of publications on the Humanities and Social Relations that has recently been inaugurated under the auspices of the Institute of Philological Studies at Keio University, Tokyo. I gladly take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the General Editor of the series, Professor Nobuhiro Matsumoto for his interest and encouragement from the very beginning of the project. Thanks are also due to Professor Junzaburo Nishiwaki, of Keio University, for the kindness he has shown me on this and many other occasions.

I further express my thanks and appreciation to my former student Mr. Takao Suzuki for invaluable assistance throughout the entire process of developing this book. To him I am especially indebted for useful information and advice in connection with Chapter IX.

The present work does not claim to be anything more than a brief sketch, since limitations of space forced me to leave untouched many topics which might well have been included, and to select only those themes which seemed of the utmost importance for an investigation such as I proposed to make of the magical working of language. More than that, it was originally intended that I should write a few additional notes on the structure of Chinese language in order to illustrate by concrete examples some of the points developed in chapters IV and VIII — concerning, in particular, the subject-predicate form of proposition and the historical formation of the parts of speech in Chinese. But I soon convinced myself that these were questions too large to be treated in that way, and that it was impossible to discuss them to my satisfaction without going too far afield for the purposes of this book. I have therefore decided to keep this discussion for a later day.

I fondly hope in a not too distant future to produce another work dealing especially with the structural characteristics of Chinese and the influence they have exerted on the ways of verbal thinking of Chinese people.

T. Izutsu

Tokyo, 1955

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTORY

#### Between Magic and Logic

From whatever angle we may approach it, language is a subject of infinite complexity, and problems it raises are naturally varied and numerous in the extreme. It is little wonder that many widely different methods of inquiry have been proposed by various scholars sharing an interest in this phase of human activity. In view of such a situation I think it not out of place to try to clarify, by way of preliminaries, the nature of the main questions to be discussed in the following chapters and the kind of approach which I shall follow in dealing with them, so that I might indicate here in gross outlines the scope and limits of my investigation.

To put it in a nutshell, my purpose in this book is to study the world-wide and world-old belief in the magical power of language, to examine its influence on the ways of thinking and acting of man, and finally to carry out an inquiry, as systematically as may be, into the nature and origin of the intimate connection between magic and speech.

No one will deny that language stands first and foremost among the vital concerns of the present age. Indeed in both academic and popular circles it is at present one of the most favourite topics. It is important to remark on the other hand that this general interest in linguistic problems is characterized by a markedly negative or critical attitude towards the working of the word, and this is altogether characteristic of the current trends of thought. We may usefully recall here the view which has been steadily gaining ground of late among radical thinkers that even philosophy should be conceived as a *critique* of language rather than as anything else. As often pointed out, ours is an age in which man is becoming increasingly word-conscious; an age, when the original, formative power of language has come to hold the central position in our conception of human mentality, and when even the man in the street has realized with astonishment how easy it is to be deceived and misled by words. Such being the case, it is no cause for wonder that the 'magical' power of the word has come to occupy the focus of attention of all those who would explore the nature of the human mind and the structure of human knowledge.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the subject bristles with difficulties and uncertainties. The very notion of 'magic' or 'the magical', which seems, on the face of it, clear and simple like anything, involves one in strange



perplexities as soon as one wants to work it out in detail in relation to the more fundamental aspect of linguistic activity. For the consideration of this problem will force one sooner or later into assuming the formidable task of elucidating the deep-lying magical implications of linguistic 'meaning' itself. Indeed, it is easy to enumerate and to describe various types of verbal superstition as actually encountered among savage peoples throughout the world, nor is it so difficult to bring to light the theoretical principles underlying these strange customs and habits. (This will be done in the earlier chapters of this book.) Grave difficulties present themselves if we attempt to go down to the hidden fountainhead of all word-magic, if we, in other words, want to trace back the apparently organic connection between magic and language to its ultimate source. However, this too must be attempted at all costs. So I propose to examine anew this difficult but highly important problem in the latter half of the book, and I shall advance there a working hypothesis regarding the prehistory of human language, which will help us forward a step towards clearness in conceiving the fact of the magical overtone of all linguistic meaning.

By way of a beginning, let us give passing attention here to the problem of the stratification of speech functions and try to follow the life history, so to speak, of the magical use of language as opposed to all other uses, from the earliest imaginable ages down to the present day. It will serve, I hope, as a general picture, which may profitably be kept in mind in order that my argumentation throughout this book might appear in the right perspective.

Now we can think of human language at several distinct stages of development. The noted French writer, Henri Berr, has made the pregnant remark: the hand and language, and Man is there. He means to say that the emergence of the hand and language in the ascendant course of living beings marks the close of zoological and the beginning of human history. Precisely how and when that decisive anthropological moment arrived, when the subhuman animal destined to become man stood up for the first time on two legs and began to chatter is a question which it will never be possible for us to clear up. But this much we can guess with a fair amount of probability: when human speech first started some hundred thousands of years before the dawn of history, it must have been scarcely more than animal cries, since in those earliest ages Man himself, in the limitations of his intelligence, could certainly not have been so far above his zoological brethren. Pithecanthropus who, together with Sinanthropus, represents the type of real but extremely primitive man, had a brain capacity sufficient for the development and expansion of those cerebral areas usually associated with the power of articulate speech, and his humanlike thigh-bone clearly indicates that he walked in the upright position (cf. Elliot Smith, *The Evolution of Man*). So he presumably did speak, but whether he spoke in the way we habitually expect man to speak is very doubtful. Specialists in prehistoric archeology tell us that even at the level of the paleolithic

Mousterians, that is to say after already 200,000 years — and this on a very modest estimate — of *human* history, man, with his chinless jaw, overhanging eyebrow ridges and a retreating forehead, was very bestial-looking, and his speech, judging from the attachment for the muscles of the tongue must have been still mumbling (cf. Gordon Child, *Man Makes Himself*, Ch. IV). Yet, on the other hand, the burials at Le Moustier suggest that even at this stage, he must have been already in possession of some animistic or pre-animistic ideas concerning the supernatural; moreover, the things placed around the corpses there are said to be such as may be interpreted as of magical significance. Of course we are completely in the dark as to the mutual relation of language and magic in those far-distant days, having no such evidence as would support even a hypothesis. But even here, if we permit ourselves to think in terms of pure theory, it is not at all impossible to picture to ourselves an imaginary scene of primitive magic — in the most rudimentary form to be sure — presiding over the fumbling first steps of human language.

It is sometimes held that the complete and fully fledged human language possibly dates from the epoch of Azilian culture (to be situated between the paleolithic and the neolithic ages). Now if this view may be taken as in the main correct, it would mean that the transition from animal forms of communication to the specifically human sort of language coincided in a broad way with the gradual formation of magical habits among our ancestors. For when, in the New Stone Age, we actually meet magic in various archeological remains, it is already fully developed and exceedingly luxuriant. Many thousands of stones and bone objects of magical purport, as idoles, fetishes, charms, amulets and talismans, that have been revealed by the archeologist's spade and assigned to the neolithic age, leave no doubt of the firmly established magico-religious usages of neolithic man. This supposed coincidence of the two decisive events in the cultural history of mankind — I mean the remarkable efflorescence of magical customs on the one hand, and the evolution of the full-fledged human language on the other — may perhaps be not without some deep significance for all theoretical discussion of linguistic origins.

I hasten to add, however, that this should not be taken as an argument for those who hold the 'Festal Origin' of language. It is not my contention, of course, that magico-religious ritual is the cradle of human speech, that only festive and ceremonial occasions could have given it birth. For, as K. Bühler has rightly remarked, that would surely be putting the cart before the horse. There are reasons to believe that the use of language antedated any formalization or standardization of ritual. But yet it would be a grave mistake to discard, on that account, the essential part that may very well have been played by magic in the formative process of human language, and to argue, as Bühler has done in his *Sprachtheorie*, that all magical associations clustering round the words we use are in reality nothing more than additional and extraneous elements that have been gradually, piled up so to speak, on the already hardened surface of language.

Since the topic must obviously receive our constant consideration throughout the volume, I shall devote to it now just as much attention as is required for my immediate purpose, leaving further detailed discussion to my later chapters. With this in view, three points may provisionally be stressed. First, that the phenomenological structure of human language is *symbolic* throughout, in the sense in which E. Cassirer defined the term in his *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*. If we approach our problem from this viewpoint, the genesis of language may perhaps be traced ultimately to the deep-rooted tendency of the human mind towards what Susanne Langer has called 'symbolic transformation', i. e. the primary need in man of translating his experiences all the time into symbols. We shall note that to say this is to recognize at the same time that language stands in an extremely close relation to magic. In a recent work on *Thinking and Experience* H. H. Price has remarked that dreaming is perhaps more natural to the human mind than waking life is; that 'its native element, so to speak, would be a world in which everything desired was *ipso facto* fulfilled, and all propositions verified by the mere fact of being thought of' (p. 140). If indeed this type of non-empirical thinking may be acknowledged as the essential act of mind, if the fundamental structure of it be such that 'the mere thought of black clouds might cause it to believe that rain was imminent, even though the sky was in fact cloudless,' then we may perhaps feel justified in regarding language and magic as twin sisters born of one and the same natural proclivity of the human mind towards dreaming and symbol-making.

And now for my second point. Most of the theories hitherto advanced both for and against admitting the magical as a really constitutive factor of linguistic meaning appear to have identified all 'magic' with its standardized forms, i. e. with traditionally fixed ritual acts and beliefs, just as though there were no other notion of magic to be taken into consideration. This, in my opinion, is to commit an error of over-simplification. It will be seen more and more clearly as we proceed with our problem that the chief defect in previous theories has been the failure to recognize that magical ritual must have been revealed to man in a number of subjective, emotional experiences, that, before being standardized into permanent forms, it must have long played its role as what may be best described as spontaneous ritual of emotional expression. We must note at once that it is precisely this latter kind of magical ritual—the predecessor of standardized magic, we might say—that will prove to be of central importance for the general theory of meaning.

Now the facts of savage life are customarily interpreted in terms of the essential duality of the magico-religious and the profane. It is a commonplace today among anthropologists and ethnographers that primitive man lives in a manner of speaking in two essentially different worlds: the work-a-day world, the region of natural, normal, and wholly calculable happenings on the one hand, and the world of extraor-

dinary, supernormal, or supernatural affairs on the other. It is but natural that magic (understood in the sense of standardized magic) should, on this assumption, be made to belong entirely and exclusively to the latter kind of life context, while it is science, the knowledge of how to deal practically with ordinary things, that is believed to govern the former. This is doubtless largely true, and I am in no way prepared to maintain that the theory is objectionable. It must not be lost to view, however, that if we should attempt to dichotomize the practices of primitive life too rigidly and thoroughgoingly, the result will surely be a distorted view of the role played by the spirit of magic not only in the formative process of language but in the life of primitive people in general.

To put it briefly, my own opinion is this: in order to grasp better the more dynamic aspects of the magical as it acts upon the human organism both in its outward conduct and in its mental and emotional life, we must recognize that the so-called 'domains' of the Sacred and the Profane are not separated by a sharp break, but are connected with each other through an intermediary phase of what we might call after Malinowski 'spontaneous' magic. Spontaneous magic, in contradistinction to the formalized, standardized type of magic, consists in man's spontaneous natural responses to overwhelming emotion or obsessive desire, uncontrollable outbursts of emotion in words and gestures, such as the threatening gestures in fits of anger, the natural flow of words of malediction against the enemy, the spontaneous mimic reproduction of the wished-for result, and so forth. These are after all strong emotional experiences which assail man in the middle of daily practical activities, and belong as such to the domain of the natural; but yet, from a changed perspective, these spontaneous acts and spontaneous works are seen to contain in germ practically all the principles of magical ritual. The introduction of the new notion of spontaneous magic will cause us to see the problem of the relation of language with magic in a new detail, and as having aspects hitherto unnoticed by most writers. In particular, it will offer, I hope, an illuminating sidelight even on the problem of linguistic origins. But of this I shall have ample opportunity to speak later on (cf. Chapter VII).

The third point which I should like especially to emphasize at this preliminary stage is the necessity of giving careful consideration to the action and reaction of language and its magico-religious environment upon each other in the creation of the mythical picture of the world which marks everywhere the earliest phase of primitive speculation. Whatever may be said of the hypothesis of the magical origin of language, whether, in other words, there was or there was not an essential, organic connection between magic and language from the very first, it will at any rate remain certain that at some prehistoric period the two came into a most intimate connection, interpenetrated and permeated each other until at last language as a whole and as such came to be, as it were, consecrated. In the above mentioned book, Ernst Cassirer has made a great point of the fact that the concept of

*language as such* is first engendered in this sort of mythical view of the word. It will be important to remark also that this can only occur in a society where the magical spirit pervades the whole life of man, where it not only presides over the domain of the sacred but somehow extends its sway even over the domain of the profane.

Reference has already been made to the danger of enforcing the dichotomous division of normal and supernormal too rigorously upon the life-habits of primitive people. As one would expect, the same kind of danger again makes its appearance in connection with the present problem. In fact, in most current discussions on primitive psychology, little attention seems to be paid to the very fluid nature of the equilibrium between the two 'domains'. It is usually assumed that both are of equal importance in all savage societies, and that both modes of life run everywhere side by side without ever mixing. A better insight might be obtained if we introduce here the perspective of historical evolution. The fact of the matter is that under the guise of peaceful co-existence there has been a constant struggle for supremacy between the magico-religious and the rational principles. Everybody knows that the world outlook of the ancients was notoriously superstitious, while that of the modern cultured people is becoming more and more free from magic and superstition because of the ascendancy of the rational principle. This implies that the profane world of practical concerns has so enlarged itself to the detriment of the realm of magic and ritualism that the latter has at last been reduced so to speak to a mere strip of land on the surface of our social life.

Now this fact alone will be enough to suggest that, if we follow the long history of this 'territorial dispute' in the reverse direction we shall see the dominion of the purely normal becoming ever more restricted with the rapidly growing supremacy of the magical principle until in the end the pendulum will have swung completely the other way. We shall witness the spirit of magic and ritualism penetrating gradually into almost every corner of society, and pervading those phases of human life which, to us, are wholly secular and normal. Thus at the extreme end of this mental retrogression, we can imagine a stage of evolution of primitive life, at which magico-religious ideas govern almost unrestrictedly the individual and society, at which, in short, magic is practically co-extensive with life itself.

This was suggested by James Frazer, who, in the first volume of his *Golden Bough* put forward the now famous hypothesis of the 'Age of Magic'. Just as on the material side of the history of human culture there has everywhere been an Age of Stone, he argued, so on the intellectual side there must have been everywhere an Age of Magic. It seems that the universal laws of growth which develop the physical man into the characteristic traits of the race, act also on his mental structure, driving the human mind to evolve everywhere in the same direction; and that direction, strange as it may sound at first hearing, is always that of magic and ritualism.

The 'Age of Magic' is certainly nothing more than a working hypothesis, but that it is not a groundless piece of fantasy has been shown, I believe, by the trend of recent anthropological and ethnographical studies. In fact, an increasing number of observations on the ways and customs of primitive man has brought to light not only that magic is found everywhere even among the rudest tribes, but that in a very great majority of cases it is found to absorb nearly the whole life of a man under primitive conditions. A broad survey of social customs and habits of life prevalent among primitive peoples today will clearly show that what we usually call daily practices and consider as nothing more than simple, practical acts, such as eating and drinking, washing, bathing etc., do possess, in the eyes of the primitive, a strikingly deep symbolic value; that these, so-called routine actions of our modern cultural life are in reality but faded rituals. Indeed we are even somewhat perplexed today by the discovery that, from the cradle to the grave, nay, from awakening until sleep, the life of a savage is regulated to the minutest details through strict prescriptions and interdictions of a magico-religious nature. Not only are all the 'crises' of life (birth, adolescence, marriage and death) and important collective undertakings (hunting, agriculture, or commerce) surrounded with solemn rites and ceremonies, but throughout the practical everyday existence itself there runs a dim perception of sacramental forces which seems to tincture the whole life with something of the magical. So much so that in some extreme cases there appears to be practically no 'daily life' in the sense in which we normally understand the term.

Thus whether we go in the direction of our ancestors or in that of savage tribes living today on the periphery of the civilized world, we seem driven ever more to conclude that the human race is foreordained to pass through a peculiar stage of mental development which may be most aptly described as an 'Age of Magic', in which magical preoccupations largely dominate almost every sphere of life. Indeed, the further we go back in time and the further we get away from higher modes of life, the more indubitable does it seem to become that magic does form the keynote of primitive life, and that the mind of primitive man, in spite of all the weighty objections that have been brought against the theory of Lévy-Bruhl, is after all predominantly 'pre-logical' or pre-empirical. Viewed in this light, the magical note which prevails over the linguistic behaviour of early and primitive people in general proves to be no other than a partial—though evidently the most important—aspect of their total magical orientation of life. The universal belief in the sacrosanctity of the 'word' as such (and not of this or of that individual word alone), which is counted as one of the characteristic features of the mythical thinking all over the world and throughout the ages, and which, as one sees, is too striking a phenomenon to be a mere curious coincidence can only be satisfactorily accounted for if we consider it as a peculiar product of the Magical Age and study it against the background of various ideas, customs, and habits which characterize such a stage of mental evolution.



Now to sum up all these considerations: I have made a beginning by assuming that both language and magic may with some confidence be traced back ultimately to the basic need of the human mind of forever providing itself with symbolic versions of experience, that is, in short, to the natural proclivity of man towards symbol-making. As regards the mutual relation between the two, it has been suggested that magic may possibly antedate the evolution of language, for such an elaborate and high form of symbolism as human language could hardly have arisen except in those places where the lower processes of symbolization were already in exuberant growth. I have further suggested that magic in the sense of spontaneous ritual, i. e. the reaction of human organism to a critical situation in spontaneous outburst, may very well be regarded as the matrix of spoken language. But whether this is true or not, it is at any rate an empirical fact that the linguistic outlook of early man is so closely associated with magical beliefs that they appear as continuous and inextricable, and this fact must be explained in some way or other. The hypothesis of the 'Age of Magic' has been presented as of decisive importance for elucidating the process of this integration.

Solomon Reinach once said: human history is the progress of laicization. In fact, since the dawn of historic age the story of mankind may succinctly be said to have been a long arduous process of transforming the primitive magico-religious world-view into a completely secularized and physically founded scientific outlook. Enormous has been the amount of effort paid by man for emancipating himself from the fetters and bondages of superstition and other primitive stages of mind.

This process we can observe in a more condensed form in the history of language. Closely parallel to the progress of laicization of man's life, and faithfully reflecting it in its various forms and functions, language has increasingly emancipated itself from the hands of such symbol-mongers as magicians and sorcerers, has gradually made itself an instrument adequate to the full complexity of human life in a secularized society. Now as modern society shows a strong tendency to become more and more differentiated into various independent spheres of activity, each with its intricate network of relations both public and private, it is only natural that the uses to which words are put should become correspondingly ever more diversified and variegated. They are, so to speak, forced to increase in flexibility and adaptiveness, and in accordance with the ever growing demands of culture and civilization, to become charged with increasingly manifold functions to subserve. Thus it comes about that what we now call under the simple appellation of 'language' is in reality a highly developed complex structure, a composite made up of multiple functional layers. Under the existing conditions of contemporary individual and social life, one and the same word or one and the same combination of words is in this way constantly required to minister to a vast variety of purposes. Hence the urgent need felt in any scientific treatment of linguistic symbols of distinguishing and isolating fundamental modes of meaning or language 'uses'. In point of fact, since

the publication of the pioneer work of C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards on *The Meaning of Meaning* in which the now famous referential-emotive dichotomy of meaning functions was first presented to the learned world, various attempts have been made to differentiate the principal ways in which linguistic symbols are used and then to subdivide them into a number of secondary divisions, and a good deal of controversy has been wasted on the subject. Now if we go down to the very root of the issues involved, the problem turns out to be the basal one of a comprehensive classification of major kinds of signs and symbols, a problem which is beyond any doubt in the forefront of current philosophic and semantic speculations.

As one of the most serious attempts that have been made to cope with this problem we may mention that of Charles Morris who, in his *Symbols, Language and Behavior*,<sup>Signs</sup> distinguishes four principal modes of signifying, four primary sign usages, and by pairing these two sets of distinctions obtains sixteen major 'types of discourse' or specializations of language. It is perhaps unnecessary to go in detail over all the language uses thus distinguished, for it would take us too far afield for the purposes of this chapter. I must also for the moment leave on one side the question as to the legitimacy of treating, as he does, linguistic symbols within the framework of a purely 'behavioral' semiotic. I shall simply point out here the fact that many of the specializations of language recognized by Morris are apparently far removed from the realm of magic and ritual. The fact is that the steadily growing laicization and ramification of human life has brought about a vast variety of specialized uses of language which bear little or no relation to primitive world-view, so that the magical use of language has been so to speak driven away from its former place of honour and has become only one use among others. From our modern point of view, it occupies but a very special and very insignificant position, having nothing at all to remind us of those glorious prerogatives which it once enjoyed.

Apparently the magical function of language has, among us, been altogether forced into the background of social and individual life; it has not precisely died out, it is still living, but barely living confined to a niche of its own. Witness the so-called ceremonial or ritual language which is in fact no other than the lineal descendant of the primordial magical language; it is evident that its usage is now restricted to a narrowly limited range of circumstances. We do certainly hear ritual language on some solemn occasions of more or less religious import such as marriage ceremony, burial service, or rites performed in houses of worship. But these are very specific and very rare occasions definitely set apart from ordinary life; add to this that they are rapidly losing the magico-religious associations which they originally possessed. We do use ourselves this kind of language when, for instance, we utter a curse, take an oath, recite a creed, say words of promise. It is no less than David Hume who compared a promise 'by which we bind ourselves to the performance of any action' to the use of words in holy sacraments. But, judged by the rational standard of modern living, these are after all but trivial things;

they are simply discredited survivals from the primitive ages when man was a 'savage' in the fullest sense of the word. How many of the denizens of our modern civilized world are conscious of performing some magical act when, say, they utter a formula of greeting? No one can be absurd enough to take the swear words used in everyday conversation as real magical formulae; everybody knows that they subserve no greater function than that of mere 'intensification'. "By Heaven!" "Goodness gracious!" "My God!"—these and hundred others have all but entirely become interjections. Living in a pre-eminently scientific age we no longer think in terms of hidden agency; nor is our society equipped with all sorts of gifts of civilization a fit place for ghosts, devils, demons, and other malignant or benevolent spirits to hover around. What use, then for all those wildest vagaries of our savage forefathers such as magic, sorcery, divination, and prophecy? What have primitive uses of language to do with us, when they are known to be mere relics of savagery?

Indeed, nothing seems to be so remote from the scientific mind of today as magic and sorcery, whether verbal or non-verbal. Even if it be true, as I believe it is, that the magical use of language represents the most primitive, that is, genetically the most fundamental speech function, of which all the others may be but secondary derivatives, yet it must also be recognized that genetic priority does not necessarily spell 'priority' without qualification. And it is quite conceivable that, from the standpoint of contemporary users of language symbols, the scale of valuation should appear even completely reversed. As a matter of fact, this has induced many eminent writers on language to hold an extremely low opinion of this peculiar speech function. Some have thought it too negligible to be specially attended to; others have attempted to explain it as derived from some more fundamental function or functions. Irving M. Copi of Michigan, for instance, who adopts a threefold theory of basic linguistic functions, namely, informative, expressive, and directive, states in his *Introduction to Logic* (1954) that the 'ceremonial' use of language cannot be recognized as an altogether unique kind of usage, but can be best understood as a mixture or combination of expressive and directive functions (p. 27-28).

We shall note that such an approach, though perhaps legitimate and justifiable so long as the purely *logical* analysis of language is concerned, may nevertheless lead to very superficial, and in many cases, erroneous views on the nature of our own linguistic habits. My own feeling is that no theoretician of language who would grasp the mental processes which underlie the mechanism of speech can afford to ignore the uniqueness of the magical function of words, the effects of whose working become more and more conspicuous as we penetrate deeper into the mystery of human language. Furthermore, a slight shift of perspective will at once reveal that the spirit of primeval word-magic which we generally believe to be well-nigh dead and extinguished in the civilized parts of the world, is, in reality, still alive with scarcely unabated vigour—though, needless to say, in greatly

modified form—even among contemporary cultured men, and that these so-called 'relics of savagery' are exerting in overt as well as covert ways an enormous influence upon various aspects of their thought and conduct.

Dogs and cats, says Stuart Chase with a bitter sense of irony, are 'realists'; they have no superstition; the lord of the earth alone is capable of unbelievable follies and absurdities. The love of magic as one of the essential traits of human mind has, for good or ill, had much to say in the development of that speech faculty which is undoubtedly characteristically human. This alone will be enough to drive home the lesson of the last paragraph, namely, that no real analysis of linguistic habits at the human level can with impunity ignore the singular importance of the magical function of language which has its root deeply struck in the inveterate symbolic tendency of man's mind. We may rightly look down upon various linguistic habits of openly magical import which we still observe around us as 'primitive absurdities', but it would be a grave mistake if we forget the while that the language in our possession is an instrument originally designed to serve 'absurd' purposes, that it is 'a medium developed to meet the needs of arboreal man' (Ogden and Richards). With all its wealth of modernized forms and rationalized structures, it is, after all, the absurdity of absurdities. We may do well to keep in mind that even when we are talking or thinking in terms of logic and science the words we actually use are largely survivals from the remotest ages.

Now since my standpoint in this study is not that of present-day users of linguistic symbols, and since, further, my immediate theme is an exploration of the deeper strata of speech mechanism, I shall be excused for parting with the rationalistic view of language with its characteristic tendency to lay too great a stress on the *communication* of thought as the end of language at the expense of other functions. But it would be too rash, even in this kind of investigation, to undervalue systematically the immense importance of the intellectual aspect of language. For there is evidently no denying that the rationalization of linguistic symbols is one of the most precious acquisitions of human intellect on its onward march, and it is clear, moreover, that it has been the starting-point of practically all genuinely intellectual works of mankind.

The highly prized designative-informative capacity of language, i. e. the capacity of lending itself to utterances designed for the objective, disinterested statement of fact, or even to propositions belonging to the scientific type of discourse is obviously the farthest removed from the circle of magical ideas, being, at the extremity of development, even diametrically opposed to all magical evocation. Since, however, no real use of words is thinkable without any element of indication or designation, the informative function in its rudimentary forms must have been present in human language along with other functions from the very beginning. What is more, there is even a respect in which this speech function, whose present status seems to have nothing at all to do with magic or ritual, might well be



traced back to a magical origin. Besides, the evidence afforded by anthropology and ethnography shows that the act of indication or designation itself, whether physical or mental, is to the early type of mind not without some deep magical implication. But this aspect of the problem calls for a lengthy discussion, and I shall return to it more than once in later chapters. Let it suffice for the moment to remark that, whatever may be said of the origin of the designative-informative use of language, its growth was evidently made possible only with the extraordinary development in men of intellectual quality, and, more generally, with the advance of culture and civilization; as to its scientific or logical elaboration it will need no special stressing that it dates from the nearest past.

So important a part has this newly developed function come to play in the intellectual life of the civilized men and women of today that they are apt to forget that even they use their language in ordinary circumstances rarely in an objective way. Many thinkers have written as if this were the most natural function of human language. To describe objects or to make statements is very often supposed to be the typical use of words, upon which all the others must somehow be superimposed. Such a view has resulted from an insufficient observation of the way language is actually used. The objective, disinterested statement of fact, to say nothing of logical reasoning, is not at all a common thing even among the members of civilized countries. Nor, for that matter, is our language in any way a perfect instrument. On the contrary, upon even a cursory examination it soon reveals itself to be too inadequate a tool to be relied upon for purposes of science and logic. Beset with all manner of misleading qualities, it has sometimes been rightly compared to a magical mirror specially devised for the purpose of distorting reality. Modern mathematicians and logicians interested in linguistic problems are generally more or less sceptical of the possibility of straining the logical resources of natural language. Each sentence, so assures us R. Carnap, in order to become logical must be rewritten; but even if rewritten it would not be sufficiently logical. So much so that those who demand a strict exactitude are sooner or later forced to go beyond the natural language and to have recourse to some artificially constructed logical language developed by scientific reflection.

These various considerations taken together seem to suggest that we may possibly construct with a fair amount of success a comprehensive theory of language on the basis of the opposition of magic and logic as the two poles of all linguistic behaviour. There can be no pretence, of course, that this is the sole (or best) approach to linguistic theory; it will be but one among many possible ways of access, and a very specific one into the bargain, but it will have the advantage of bringing to light such aspects of the problem as would otherwise remain unnoticed. The central point of such an approach will consist in examining afresh the whole domain of linguistic activity in terms of a struggle between magic and logic; in other words, language will be presented as something sandwiched between these two rival

principles striving for supremacy with each other. In an ancient Oriental myth, the story is told of how the terrestrial world, falling a common prey to two competing cosmic powers, finally comes to assume a double status, partaking of the characteristics of both the realm of Light and the realm of Darkness. Such is precisely the case with the present status of our language held between the magical tendencies deep-rooted in human nature on the one hand, and on the other now rapidly growing logical demands for ever more precise information as to the exact facts observed.

Thus language, on this assumption, will be conceived as a very complex and characteristically double-faced halfway thing, neither purely magical nor again perfectly logical, but always fluctuating in varying degrees between the two poles, from the lowliest, i. e. openly superstitious, use of words to the most objective statement of fact in the scientific type of discourse. Without going more into detail on this subject here, I will only note down the result I have in mind. It is as follows: as there can be no magical use of language without at least a minimum of logicity, so in ordinary descriptive use of language—or even in scientific discourse—the actual words employed cannot in the nature of the case be entirely free from illogicality. In natural language there always is something that stubbornly resists to a thoroughgoing logical analysis, and that is why any attempt at logicalizing it in its entirety is predestined to a break-down.

As I have suggested before, the words and the ways we combine them are largely remnants from primitive ages. The primeval force of magical spirit lurking behind these survivals time and again reasserts itself. Though apparently it has been completely driven out of the vast field of contemporary scientific discourse, and though it appears to be rapidly losing its ascendancy over other fields too, yet as long as we speak and think by means of hereditary words, it is not extinct; it is still there, working in disguise. As John Murphy remarks, 'we slip back upon the primitive in religion as in feeling and conduct, because the primitive is in us all, and even what is highest in us has climbed up from it, and has its ultimate origin in primitive forms' (*The Origin and History of Religion* p. 4). Paradoxical though it may sound, our century, according to some competent semanticists, suffers more grievously than any past age from the ravages of verbal magic. Why? Because the verbal magic has, so to speak, gone underground; it has altered its ways, has disguised itself, and has assumed more insidious forms than before. It has to a great extent been neutralized and enervated, but by suffering this loss it has succeeded in becoming the warp and wool of all our thinking without our being in the least conscious of the fact. And herein lies a great danger.

It seems to follow from these considerations that in order that we might be in a position to deal adequately with some of the most pressing linguistic problems of the present age, when man is becoming more and more word-conscious and when the dangerous snares and traps laid everywhere by our own language are being

keenly felt, we should once again trace our linguistic habits as far back in time as our materials allow us, or even beyond that, and thence try to reinterpret them by all the stages of development in between. Not only can we by this means hope to go to the very heart of the difficulties lying at the root of the problem of word-magic which is so much in the forefront of current attention, but we might perhaps open a new sort of approach to a number of old questions.

## Chapter II

### THE MYTHICAL VIEW OF LANGUAGE

The age of animism, or the 'Age of Magic', to which reference was made in the foregoing chapter, tends to produce, as we can easily see, all manner of verbal superstitions. I will begin by giving in this chapter a few typical instances of word-magic in order to get a good starting-point for the formulation of our main problems. But a preliminary difficulty must be faced before we can examine successfully the relevancy and significance of the examples which will be given.

Up to the present we have used the terms 'magic' and 'magical' in a somewhat loose, undefined way. The proposed scope and aim of our study being, however, not to deal with the superstitious conception of language which characterizes the thought of man in the early stages of his cultural development, but primarily to elaborate in terms of general linguistic theory the notion of magic in so far as it concerns the very make-up of human language, it would seem necessary to introduce at this point some more precision into our terminology. However, it is far from easy, if not impossible, to frame a satisfactory definition of the concept in question, if only for the reason that it immediately raises another puzzling problem of drawing a line of demarcation between magic and religion, a problem which has long exercised and vexed the ingenuity of anthropologists and students of comparative religion and has ranged the leading authorities of the last generation on opposite sides, as to whether magic involves, as certainly does religion, a belief in conscious or personal agents, and as to which of the two is older in the history of humanity. The well-known theory of James Frazer which he has propounded in *The Magic Art* (Chap. IV), suggests that there is a radical conflict of principle between magic and religion, the former being simply based on a mistaken association of ideas by similarity and by contiguity, and assuming as its most fundamental notion that the world is governed not by spirits or gods but by unconscious impersonal powers which act mechanically as immutable laws of nature, while the latter regards the current of events and the course of human life as being directed by superhuman beings, whose good-will man may woo by means of prayer and sacrifice. Taken thus in the sense of a propitiation of superhuman powers, religion may surely stand in fundamental antagonism to magic, but, on the other hand, it is very doubtful if the primitive type of magic can ever be practised where there is no belief, however crude and rudimentary, in spirits, or at least in 'numinous' beings endowed with some mysterious power, who, accord-

ingly, are moved to action not in the manner of the rigid and invariable processes of nature but rather in ways which baffle and frustrate ordinary comprehension creating thereby the feeling of awe and reverence in the mind of primitive man.

On Frazer's view, religious and magical rites are of an altogether different character from each other; and to utter prayers and incantations in the same breath (as it happens, for instance, with the Melanesians described by R. A. Codrington,) is to commit a flagrant theoretical inconsistency of behaviour. But regarded from the view-point of the linguist, there is no radical difference of principle recognizable between magic and religion, since the fundamental linguistic structure of spells and incantations on the one hand, and that of prayers and rituals on the other, are substantially the same, their differences lying not in essentials but largely on the surface, and being explicable quite appropriately in terms of the phases of evolution of an exactly identical type of language. Moreover, this seems to fit in better with the more recent trend in the science of religious origins which, instead of postulating an absolute distinction between magic and religion, proceeds by examining, comparing and classifying all types of worship actually met with among various races of mankind through the ages and over the world, and accords the name of 'primitive religion' to animism as well as to the so-called Mana-worship, that is, recognizes these two as the most primitive and elementary forms of religion from which even the highest religions have slowly and gradually grown up. Both magic and religion, in this view, spring from the common taproot of Mana, a mysterious, supernatural power which on this account may rightly be characterized as magico-religious; it is, we are told, from the belief in this numinous potency running through all the phenomena of nature that magic and religion ultimately draw their origin (cf. John Murphy, *op. cit.* Chap. VIII).

All things considered, it seems best to remain content with a provisional definition which will prove most useful for our descriptive purposes, and which will comprise everything that may be called magic (white and black), witchcraft, or sorcery, without any attempt at discriminating them rigidly and absolutely from religious beliefs and practices. We shall bring, then, under the head of magic all those actions by which man seeks to wield at will the course of nature and to influence all beings, ranging from the lowliest animals up to gods, and including—though this might sound queer on first hearing—even himself. These actions constitute magical rite in the broadest sense, and for their efficacy they depend largely on miraculous powers believed to be inherent in certain articles, words, or gestures which are involved as their kernel parts. In the case of religion as distinguished from magic, the efficacy of these processes is usually made to be dependent not so much on the will of man himself as on the absolute will of some higher power working behind the visible screen of nature. But the difference is, at least from our specific point of view, rather irrelevant and may conveniently be left out of account. Arguing along these lines, we might regard linguistic magic as a particular

type of magic in which words and sentences, supposed to be bearers of dreadful might, that is, in the capacity of charms, spells, incantations and the like, are made to play the leading part in processes of the sort just described for bringing about the desired result, be it the benefit or the injury of individuals, the welfare of the community, or the supplication and propitiation of some power in the universe far surpassing that of man himself.

Now this belief in the vital power of the spoken word is one of the most salient characteristics of the primitive type of mind. In fact, among the ancients and the primitives the notion of the spoken word as a mystical force plays so prominent a role that it is no exaggeration to say that it stamps the whole trend of their life with the impress of verbal magic. So great and irresistible is this power believed to be that the magician adept in the art of manipulating his verbal tool is expected to accomplish practically everything desired. But it must be borne in mind that in primitive society all men are more or less magicians. Early man had constant recourse to the processes of verbal magic for astonishingly diverse purposes: to secure the country's or the tribe's prosperity, to regulate the processes of nature with a view to ensuring the fertility of his cattle and the fruitfulness of food-plants, to prevent and cure diseases or to cause them, to repel noxious animals, to work the death of an enemy, to avert and ward off the assaulting powers of evil with which—so he believed—the air was filled, to win the heart of a girl, and so on almost without end. Even the notion of constraining and coercing the gods in his favour by the utterance of spells was not at all far-fetched to the mind of early man. The magicians and sorcerers of ancient Egypt, not content to prostrate before the high divinities humbly imploring their aid, often sought instead to prevail upon them by threats and intimidation (see H. Grapow, *Bedrohungen*, Ä. Z. 1911).

But the denizens of heaven, on their part, could little dispense with the use of magic and magical words. In Egypt as well as in Babylonia, the high divinities wore amulets and talismans for protection, and themselves used various magical means for the attainment of their ends. The great god of Babylon, Marduk, was 'the magician of the gods'. Similarly the god Thout of Egypt was the master of sorcery. It is worth noting here that in these cases of divine magic too, the word with its inherent miraculous power was the chief instrument in the hands of the gods. Every word uttered by them took effect as magic; and once uttered it was unalterable and irresistible. 'As surely as rain and snow', declares the Second Isaiah (the prophet here is speaking in the name of Yahweh, as his mouth-piece), 'that fall from heaven never return there without having watered the earth until it yields seed for the sower and bread for the hungry, so my Word that goes forth from my mouth shall not return unto me in vain without having worked out what I desired and without having carried out that for which I dispatched it' (Is. 55, 10-11). We know that the canonical liturgies used in Isin and Hammurabi



periods, usually contained among other things a special hymn to the divine Word (Enem). Here is a characteristic passage from a very old prayer to the Moon-God;

As for thee, thy word, when it passes on high like the wind, brings  
pasturage and drink plenteously in the land.  
As for thee, when thy word is issued on the earth, the sweet-smelling  
plants are produced  
As for thee, thy word makes fat sheepfold and cattle-stall, enlarging  
the creatures with the breath of life.  
As for thee, thy word causes justice and righteousness to be so that  
the people speak truthfully.  
As for thee, thy word is far-away in heaven, it is hidden in the earth,  
which no man has seen.  
As for thee, thy word who comprehends it?

(Langdon, *Babylonian Penitential Psalms* p.9-10)

Considering such profound importance attached to the compelling force of the spoken word, it is not to be wondered at if among the ancients the gods are often represented as ruling the world by the oral rites of magic, and the origin of the universe ascribed to the creative activity of the holy word. The idea that the gods govern the world through magical formulae is a favourite one to the authors of the Rigvedic hymns. (cf. H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda* p.66 ff). Equally common among ancient peoples is the inverse of this belief, namely that the supra-sensuous power residing in certain forms of words is even over the gods as well. And in fact, among the Aryans of early India the conception of gods as subject to control by the magician-priest who could chant and recite incantations in the right way seems to have been very early developed.

As regards the conception of God who creates the world by means of language it is so familiar to us from the teaching of the Old Testament that no words need be wasted on it here. Let it suffice to note that long before the Israelites (or even more generally, the Semites) emerged into the light of history, the Sumerians had held the doctrine that everything that exists was created by the Word of the god Enki. V. K. Gokak, in his book *The Poetic Approach to Language* (Chap. VI), has stressed the point that there was white magic in the formula 'Let there be light!' inasmuch as it was the vehicle of the divine will strong enough to make the object spring into existence as soon as the word was uttered. In point of fact it does not suffice to see the divine will working behind the word; it must be observed that in the belief of early man the word itself is, in such a context, an independent, personal agent of the holy will. In the above-cited passage from Isaiah (and in innumerable others similar to it to be found in the magico-religious literature of various peoples) the divine word is considered a living entity, almost a supersensuous personality;

we have a striking example of this phenomenon in the well-known case of 'Memra' of the post-exilic Jews.

In ancient India, as early as in the Vedic religion, we see "Vāc", i. e. Word, already raised into a personal object of worship and veneration: a goddess who, primarily as the voice of the sacrificial hymn, serves as the sole means of communication between heaven and earth and embraces and unites all things that have voice in nature. In the tenth Book of the *Rigveda* a whole hymn is dedicated to the celebration of this 'Queen' who 'holds together all existence' and who 'beyond this wide earth and beyond the heavens has become so mighty in her grandeur' (X, 125. See also X, 71). Later on in the *Brāhmanas*, this same Vac is sometimes extolled even as the supreme director and creator of the whole world. We may add, as further evidence of this tendency in the human mind towards personifying or deifying the sacred word, that the Indian deity Brahma who, along with Vishnu and Shiva makes up in Hinduism the much venerated Trimurti, and is often addressed as the supreme Creator, was originally no independent god at all in the Vedic pantheon, but was, according to the now widely accepted theory of Hubert and Mauss, simply some mysterious power supposed to be operating in the spell or the prayer, and only with steadily increasing ascendancy of the priestly caste after the Rigvedic age with its exclusive claim to the knowledge of the sacred sacrificial formulae, gradually came to be elevated to such a predominant position in the religious life of the people.

These strange notions concerning the magical function of language, which are strikingly incongruous and repelling to the critical intelligence, are nevertheless quite of a piece with primitive modes of thought, and, on reflection, even with the general mental framework and constitution of at least the great majority of mankind. This has an important bearing upon the very nature of our language, and is therefore worthy of a few moments' attention.

As we shall see more fully later, the constitution of our primary world of reality depends in large measure upon the structural patterns of our own language. What common-sense believes to be the concrete, objective reality proves, upon a closer inspection, to be largely a product of our linguistic habits. Language pervades and penterates all our experience; it is so deeply embedded in, and so closely interwoven with, the very tissue of 'reality' as we experience it that it seems practically impossible for us to look at the outer world except through the looking-glass of language. In short, language and reality are, at least at the level of common experience, fused into one. The full significance of this fact for the main subject of this book will become apparent only in later chapters. Here we shall simply note that this sort of close correspondence between the structure of language and the structure of the world as it confronts our eyes is of course beyond the reach of man in the lower grades of intellectual development. But the primitive type of

mind tends to posit instead another kind of intimate relationship between language and reality, that, to wit, of casuality. As we shall see presently, this is induced by the universal tendency of the human mind to confuse the sign and the thing signified.

Nothing is so wide-spread than the feeling that word and thing are identical, or that there exists some mysterious natural correspondence between the two. Scholars working in various fields of study have unanimously recognized that among primitive people as well as among our own children, words, far from being mere labels attached to things, are themselves real objects, or even represent the essential, integral parts of the objects. The word is the very 'soul' of the thing.

For the scientifically trained moderns, words are nothing more than conventional signs; that is to say, the relation between an object and the word which serves as its symbol is principally external and arbitrary, though in the case of onomatopoeic and other more or less 'motivated' words there may be some sort of natural connection between them. Words, at any rate, are not things on the same level as non-verbal, material things; nor are they properties or attributes inherent in the things; much less are they 'spiritual things' as Whitman and Goethe in their mystical intoxication imagined them to be; they are external, non-natural labels, neither more nor less. 'We employ words,' A. B. Johnson remarked, 'as though they possess, like specie, an intrinsic and natural value; rather than as though they possess, like bank notes, a merely conventional, artificial, and representative value. We must convert our words into the natural realities which the words represent, if we would understand accurately their value.' (*Treatise on Language*, 1836, p.152) This process of conversion is exactly the contrary of what primitives are accustomed to do. For them, words *are* things which are as concrete as material objects, bodily actions, and physical events. So it comes about that in a number of ancient languages, the notion of word and the notion of event or thing are represented by one and the same term, a phenomenon so familiar to the readers of the Old Testament. The Israelites make practically no distinction whatsoever between the thing, the name, and the idea. Moreover they equate word and action. The result is that in Hebrew the most ordinary term for 'word' ('dābhār' or its synonym "ōmer") is in fact a semantic complex meaning at the same time word, thing, matter, affair, action, deed, event etc., and one and the same verb "dibbār" which is derived from the identical root <dbr> is constantly used in the sense of speaking and in the sense of behaving. In Arabic, the term "amr" meaning properly 'the word of command' or 'order'—the corresponding verb is "amara", which means 'to order' 'to command', and etymologically belongs to the same root as the Hebrew verb "amar" 'to say' which is also used in the sense of 'commanding' (Job. 9, 7, Ne. 13, 9, II Chr. 24, 8, Ps. 109, 34, etc.)—is the commonest word used in the sense of 'thing', 'event', 'affair', or 'case'. Moreover, in the old idiom of the desert Arabs, the verb 'to say' "qāla" seems to have been used for all sorts of actions where no use of the tongue is involved. Alfred Guillaume (*Prophecy and Divination*, p. 173) has

drawn attention to a very curious fact that, according to Ibn al-Athīr, the Beduin used to say, for instance 'He spoke with his hand' ("Qāla bi-yadi-hi") in the sense of 'he took', and 'He spoke with his foot' ("Qāla bi-rijli-hi") in the sense of 'he walked', and so forth. In Accadian, likewise, "amātu" contains meanings of 'word', 'thing', and 'event'. Similarly in Ethiopian the same word "nagar" means both 'speech' and 'thing'. The same applies to the Sumerian word "inim"—or "enim" "enem"—, a real semantic conglomerate representing as it does a complex total conception which our later analytic mind would feel urged to split up into at least four distinct concepts, 'word', 'incantation', 'thing', and 'affair'. (It may be remarked by the way that the most ordinary term in Sumerian for 'spell', "en", is in all probability derived from this word.) For the ancient Japanese, in like manner, there was no difference between the spoken word and the matter, and consequently the same term "koto" did duty for both.

If, among primitive people, the word is thus completely identified with the matter, it would be but a step further for them to regard the word as something living and spiritual, something endowed with a soul. The blessing and curse which are so important in the life of primitives, and which are indeed found in closely parallel forms wherever there is man, are only conceivable on the ground of some such belief in the mysterious soul-power of the word. In primitive circumstances, formulas of the type 'Thou art blessed!' are not formal words of greeting, expressive only of the kindly wishes for the future; similarly, 'Thou art cursed!' are not stereotyped forms of speech denoting the hatred and disgust on the part of the speaker. They are living substances which act and work real goods and real evils. When a man has invoked a blessing upon another, the words penetrate into the very soul of that person and create there prosperity and peace. Contrariwise, when a man speaks evil words to his neighbour, the horrible curse takes root at once in the victim's soul, grows up there, goes on gnawing it and finally makes it 'light', i. e. completely emptied of its substance. It may be remarked that in Hebrew the ordinary verb meaning 'to curse' is "qillēl", that is 'to make light <qal>'. (Cf. Johs Pedersen, *Israel, its Life and Culture*, vol. 1, p. 99ff., p. 411, ff.)

A striking example of this belief in the efficacy of the magical power of the word is seen in the 'Word-soul' ("koto-dama") of the early Japanese. Their spiritual life as depicted in the *Manyō-shū*, the oldest anthology of Japanese poetry containing mainly poems of the 7th and 8th centuries, is almost entirely dominated by this sort of magical conception of language. They believed that the Country of Yamato, that is Japan, was the only country in the world where words could work in the way just described. They boastfully called their land 'the country supported by word-souls' ("koto-dama no tasukuru kuni") (*Manyō-shū* XIII, 3254) or 'the country where word-souls flourish' ("koto dama no sakihafu kuni") (ibid. V, 894). In their eyes, the effectiveness of magical words was a proof of the supreme favour which a nation enjoyed in the sight of its gods, and they thought that there was no such country besides their

native land. They were very proud of it; it even seems to have become the ultimate source of their strong national feeling. They were utterly ignorant of the fact that all their primitive neighbours were living in countries where the word-souls worked no less vigorously.

Closely allied to this phenomenon is the equally wide-spread tendency among peoples of crude culture to regard the names of men—not to speak of the names of the gods—with superstitious or almost religious awe. How deep-rooted this superstition is in the mental frame of man will easily be seen from the fact that it still prevails in full force among civilized people to-day. Thousands of highly cultured persons believe that the fortunes of the individual is inseparably bound up with the good or bad nature of his name. For reasons unknown to the ordinary man, certain names are essentially auspicious and others inauspicious. In the primitive stage of thought, the personal name of a man is an integral part of his soul; the whole of his being fills it; it is the very substance of his soul, it is himself. To know the name of a man means therefore to know his real essence, and to grasp his soul. So the primitive is generally very careful to conceal his personal name for fear that it should fall into the hands of an ill-wisher or some other malignant beings hovering around him; for in that case, the latter are supposed to be in a position to work through his name whatever magic they like on his soul-substance.

Thus among the Ainus, the aboriginal people of Japan now living in the northernmost part of the country, no woman dares to disclose to a stranger the real appellation of her husband, greatly to the annoyance of the government officials who visit their villages to take a census of population. In ancient Japan, to know the name of another or to tell one's own to other people was regarded as an important affair. Particularly women were extremely careful not to disclose their personal name; in point of fact no one except their husband—and of course their own parents—was entitled to know it; this is so in the Manyo age (7th and 8th centuries) but there are some reasons for presuming that in still older ages, such was also the case with man. In the opening poem of the *Manyō*-anthology, attributed to the Emperor Yūroku (418-79 A. D.), the poet-emperor addresses a little girl picking herbs on a hill-side with the following words: 'How I desire to know your family! Do tell me (your name)! Over the limitless country of Yamato, far and wide I reign, Over all the land I rule. As for me, I am ready to disclose to you both my family and my name.' All this, in plain language, simply amountst to saying, 'Do become my wife! I am quite willing to be your husband'.

Unfortunately the text, as handed down to us, appears to be corrupt in some minute places, and consequently, as to the exact way of reading the whole piece there is still difference of opinion among the native philologists. There can be no reasonable doubt, however, that the poem, as a whole, faithfully reflects the remarkable custom of courtship that prevailed among the Manyo-men. Besides, we have further evidence in support of this interpretation. In ancient Japanese one of the

most ordinary terms for wooing or courtship is "yobahi", the nominal form of the verb "yobafu" which is in its turn a *lengthened*, i. e. the conative or continuative, mode of the basal verb "yobu" meaning 'to call' or 'to declare loudly (one's name)'. The word vividly depicts the custom of those far-off days, when a man who fell in love with a girl and wished to pay his court to her, had first of all to visit her abode where she was living secluded with her mother, and to declare loudly and repeatedly his personal name going round the house, in expectance of her response. Not infrequently this had to continue for days; in that case it was termed "yobahi-wataru", that is, 'to continue calling'. If the girl, on her part, deigned to accept his 'calling', she disclosed to him her real name which she had jealously guarded against being known even to her own brothers. In Book XLL of the *Manyō-shū* we have a very interesting short poem by a girl, giving direct reference to this curious custom of courtship: 'I would like to tell you the name by which my dear mother addresses me,' she says, 'but how could I, when you are but a passer-by whose name I do not know yet?' These are, no doubt, words of reproach addressed to a man who, out of impatience, neglected the indispensable ceremony of telling her his own name first and dared to ask her to disclose her name. (cf. Origuchi, *Saiko Nihon-no Josei Seikatsu-no Kontei*, 折口信夫「最古日本の女性生活の根柢」'Basis of Japanese Women's Life in the Most Ancient Times'.) All this, in short, arose from the fact that to the view of early man, the name and the soul were one and the same thing. If the man was so anxious to know the name of the girl he was in love with, that was only because he had, otherwise, no means of uniting his soul with hers. And if, on the other hand, the girl spared no pains to conceal her name, that was because the man who took possession of her name took thereby possession of her real self.

Now we might expect that, if this was true even of the names of simple mortals, still more must it have been true of the sacred names of gods or other supernatural beings. And in fact, everywhere in the ancient world we find divine names regarded as mysterious things invested with terrible powers, which may inflict severe punishments for being treated negligently. The name of Yahweh was, for instance, to the view of the Israelites, Yahweh Himself, or even more than that; it was the soul of Yahweh, the very spiritual essence of Yahweh that actively manifested itself before the beloved nation. So, when the Hebrew prophets spoke 'in the name of Yahweh' (bē shēm Yahveh), or the Arabian prophet Mahomet 'in the name of Allah' (b-isimī 'Ilāh), it meant more than speaking in accordance with the divine will. It implied, as Johs Pedersen has shown (op. cit. p. 245 ff.), that they spoke with something of God's soul in them; that they became possessed of the supernatural power to speak strong (i. e. magically efficacious) words.

This being so, it is not for everybody to mention at random the divine name. Of course the name grows and prospers by being constantly mentioned and uttered; so Yahweh wants his name to be loudly extolled. But it should be done in

the right places, in the right way, and chiefly by persons fully entitled to it. As is well-known, the misuse of the sacred name was strongly forbidden in the early law of the Old Testament: 'You shall not take my name in vain, profaning thereby the name of your God; I am Yahweh your God'. (*Lev.* 19, 12) Similar customs are prevalent among various savage tribes to-day. Every time the real name of the god is pronounced, the god is so to speak, forced to appear before the utterer of his name, and this is of course very dangerous. There is also the fear of the god being subjected to the malicious will of some sorcerer through the blasphemous misuse of his sacred name; for he who can call the god by his true name is supposed to be able to exert a controlling power over the god himself. That is why many primitive people refuse to reveal the true name of their deity to strangers, and when it is necessary to refer to him, take the prudent caution to have recourse to circumlocutions. This brings us into the domain of taboo-words.

It is a commonplace now among linguists to mention, as a typical example of verbal superstition, the phenomenon of taboo-words. Taboo, or 'negative magic', as it has rightly been called, is, in the specific case of language, a set of negative precepts applied to the use of certain words of ominous associations with a view to avoiding or warding off mysterious, dangerous forces which may be released by the utterance of these words. In Japanese, taboo-words are called "imikotoba", which means 'sacred-word' — 'sacred' being taken here in the original twofold sense of holiness and pollution. The early Japanese had a plenty of them, and even to-day these still continue in survivals among farmers, hunters, and merchants. All sorts of euphemistic substitutes for the "imikotoba" have naturally been developed, thus among the hunters "yama-kotoba", that is, 'mountain-words', and among the fishers "oki-kotoba", that is, 'offing-words'. When out on hunting or on fishing, these people scrupulously avoid mentioning the names of some specific animals or fishes, and, if need arises, these are referred to by circumlocutory words and phrases which are believed to be harmless. Among the *Matagi* hunting clans (the north-east of Japan), the rules of linguistic taboo are still strictly observed; the bear, for instance, is, "Kuro-ge" (black hair), the wolf "yase" (the slim), the rice "Kusa-no mi" (grass-fruit), the snake "naga mushi" (long worm), etc. (cf. *Minzoku Gaku Jiten*, 「民俗学辞典」 Ethnographical Dictionary, comp. by K. Yanagida, 柳田国男 Tokyo.) These are examples of the 'mountain-words.' It would be interesting to note in this connection that, according to K. Kindaichi, one of the leading authorities in Japanese philology, it was probably due to some such cause that the Japanese language lost its word for one of the key events of human life, death. (金田一京助 「規範文法から歴史文法へ」 *Kihan Bunpo kara Rekishi Bunpo e* 'From Normative to Historical Grammar' 9.) In his opinion, the original Japanese word meaning 'to die' was completely lost before the historic era, leaving behind an euphemistic substitute, namely the verb "shi-nu", which has remained till our own day the only authentic word in that meaning, but which literally means something like 'to have done

completely', "shi-nu" being analysed into "shi" - "i" - "nu". Whether this argument can be accepted without reserve, may very well be doubted. But most people would probably admit that this is at least a possible view. Be that as it may, it is certain that already in a very early age this word came to be felt dangerous; it was naturally struck by a taboo ban, and various elaborate ways have been devised to fence off the ominous effect that might be produced by the utterance of the word. Finally, through the curious working of the law of association, all those words which, though having properly nothing to do with it, could by the mere play of chance be reminders of that word have come to be considered very ominous. Whatever smells of death is an agent of death; and so it happens that the number 4 "shi", for instance, having by pure accident exactly the same name as death "shi", is regarded by the vast majority of people as the most unlucky number. It may be noteworthy that this is not in the least confined to the rustic and uneducated portions of the population; thousands of otherwise quite rational people are still somewhat afraid of the nefarious effect of this number, or at least show intense scrupulousness about handling it in the right way. A limitless number of other curious examples could easily be adduced from all quarters of the globe. But the phenomenon itself is now so familiar to us, and so much work has already been done on the subject that it is not necessary to present long arguments about it here.

It should be remembered that the various forms of linguistic superstition that have been enumerated are so to speak but special cases of a more fundamental principle, namely, the view common to all mankind in the earlier stages of intellectual development that all speech in itself and as a whole is sacred, and that all names have some mysterious magic virtue. The ominous words discussed above are nothing but particularly conspicuous cases of this general fact; properly speaking, all words are more or less ominous. To the mind of early man it is not some particular words, not particular sentences that are dangerous, but—at least under certain circumstances to be discussed later (Ch.X) — every word, every sentence, in short, all speaking is awful and sacred. There is, strictly speaking, no trivial word. For the ancients as well as for the primitives, to speak, i. e. to utter speech sounds, to pronounce the names of things, means something not to be made light of. For the speech, once uttered from the mouth, calls forth some hidden force from the—seemingly—most ordinary and innocent objects and persons, powerfully influences the course of natural and human events, and, in many cases, may give entrance to the peril. To state or declare something to be so and so means at once to make the object actually so and so. In Hebrew, for instance, the causative form of the verb (the so-called Hiphil form) does not distinguish between declaring and making. When an Israelite declares someone to be right "hizdiq", that person is made actually right "zaddiq". In Hebrew grammar this is called the declaratory use of the causative, and is very frequently used.

Speech, then, in primitive thought, is a highly beneficent, but at the same time,



tremendously dangerous thing. Speaking of the Greek feast of Anthesteria, Gilbert Murray writes: 'We must avoid speaking dangerous words; in great moments we must avoid speaking any words at all, lest there should be even in the most innocent of them some unknown danger.' (*Five Stages of Greek Religion* p. 50) We have mentioned above that in a number of ancient and primitive languages, one and the same term is used for both 'word' and 'thing'. It may be interesting to observe another tendency which runs parallel to it: in many languages the term for 'word' itself has an intense magical or ceremonial connotation. Thus in Sumerian, as we have seen, the same term "inim" is used alternately in the sense of 'word' and in the sense of 'spell' or 'incantation'. This is particularly conspicuous in the case of early Japanese. Here the two principal words for speaking "noru" and "ifu" have both undeniable magical associations; there floats around them a ceremonial, if not sinister, atmosphere which pervade and penetrate them. The original meaning of the verb "noru" is to utter strong words, that is, to try to realize something through an invocation to the magical power of the word-soul. All its derivatives have invariably something to do with magical process: "i-noru" meaning 'to pray', "noro-fu" 'to call down a curse', and "nori-to" 'a ritual'. The other verb "ifu" which is to-day the most ordinary term for saying, was also originally closely connected with the act of uttering magical or ritual formulas. Its derivative "iha-fu" has preserved to this day something of this original meaning. The word "iha-fu" now means simply 'to celebrate', or 'to congratulate' but originally it meant a ritual act of consecration, namely to worship the divinity by means of ritual ceremonies, especially by the repeated recitation of necessary magical formulae, in order to enter into the state of religious purity.

Words once spoken cannot be recalled; the uttered word becomes independent of the utterer and has an uncontrollable activity of its own. In our own day we often experience the same thing in the so-called slips of the tongue which may, in case some grave consequence is involved, call forth severe social sanction. But among primitives it means more than that. It literally implies the magical release of irrevocable power which travels about in the air, and whose working no one can arrest until it completely attains its fulfillment. And of course, if the word uttered happens to be of an ominous nature, the supernatural forces which its utterance has released are sure to act on their victims and bring about horrible results. Then the utterer himself, even if he were an able magician, even if he were a prophet of God, and however much he repents and recognizes his error, can never recall the uttered word. 'My heart is troubled as morning mist', sings a poet of *Manyō-shū*, 'but I cannot with impunity express it in words.' (*Manyō-shū* XVII, 4008). When one is sad, one must keep the sadness in his heart; if not, something terrible will inevitably happen.

### Chapter III

#### THE SACRED BREATH

In order to penetrate to the deepest root of the strange notions current among primitive people as to the magical power of language, with a view to understanding them, as it were, from inside, we must, in the first place, make an attempt to trace them all to their common theoretical (if not chronological) source; and for that purpose it would be necessary to begin at the very beginning of linguistic activity. Now since all speech, needless to say, is a vocal activity and presupposes as such the process of breathing, a good starting-point will be furnished by a consideration of how magical thinking deals with the phenomenon of breath and breathing. We shall presently see that the belief in the sacredness of the breath provides in fact the theoretical ground on which all sorts of verbal superstitions can ultimately be based.

Anthropologists have repeatedly called attention to a noteworthy fact that, in the belief of many primitive peoples, the gist of magical recitations lies in the 'voice' of the magician. It is the voice, i. e. the breath, that actualizes the magical force contained in potency in the word and launches it in whatever direction the magician desires. It is in the breath that the main virtue of all verbal magic is believed to reside. The word, so long as it is not actually pronounced, must of necessity remain slumbering and inactive; only when carried by the breath can it become efficacious, and even capable of unchaining the powers of darkness. So we see everywhere magicians attaching the profoundest importance to the process of the 'catching up' of the voice in magical ceremonies. Describing the garden magic in the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski writes: 'a mat is spread on the bedstead, and on this mat another is laid. The herbs are placed on one half of the second mat, the other being folded over them. Into this opening the magician chants his spell. His mouth is quite close to the edges of the mat, so that none of his voice can go astray; all enters the yawning mat, where the herbs are placed, awaiting to be imbued with the spell'. (*Baloma; The Spirits of the Dead*. V). This is done because the magician's breath, according to the magical way of thinking, is the chief medium by which the supernormal power of the magic is generated and carried to its objective. These considerations would seem to suggest that in primitive thought the miracle-working property of language lies not so much in the intrinsic virtue of the word itself as in the mysterious nature of the breath which is capable of bringing it to actuality.

The belief in the sacredness of the breath goes back to a very remote past when

animism made its first emergence among our ancestors. Now animism, as distinguished from the *Mana* type of religion in R. R. Marett's terminology, originates when and where man begins to believe in the existence of Soul or Spirit distinctly separate from the body. Even at this stage of spiritual development primitive people very often fall short of a clean-cut notion of the 'soul', but the important point to note, on the other hand, is that practically everywhere they show a remarkable tendency to visualize the disembodied soul as something of breath-nature. The ideas of the soul and the breath are, to primitive reflection, so intimately interrelated that practically it is impossible to draw any sharp line of demarcation between the two. This is reflected in the fact that among many peoples 'breath' is frequently used as synonymous with 'soul', 'spirit', and 'life': "psykhē", "pneuma" in Greek, "anima", "spiritus" in Latin, "ātman", "prāṇa" in Sanscrit, "duh" in Russian, "rūah" "nephesh" in Hebrew, and many others. Thus in every case, the apparently vague concept of the human soul goes back to the sensory representation of the physical breath. The breath of a man, in short, is his soul.

It will be interesting to note in this connection that in Arabic one and the same root "n. f. s." has generated two words standing closely connected with each other: "nafs" (soul) and "nafas" (breath). The Hebrew word "nephesh" is also derived from the same root; originally it meant 'breath', but in a great number of passages of the Old Testament it is used in the sense of 'life', 'self', or 'soul'. Indeed, so predominant did this latter sense come to be that in the later stage of Biblical Hebrew, another word "n'shāmāh" came into use to denote 'breath' specifically, as in the famous passage of the Creation story (*Gen. 2, 7*), where we read: 'God moulded man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the *breath of life* (nishmash khayim) and man became a *living soul* (nephesh khayyāh).' As regards the other Hebrew term for the soul "ruāh", it may be observed that its original meaning was 'wind' or 'breath', these two notions being entirely confused, as is often the case among ancients and primitives — see for example the Latin term "anima" with a sensory connotation of 'wind'. This is manifest from its etymological relationship with the Greek word "anemos" 'wind' —; but later on it came to designate the human soul. Concerning the Greek term "psykhē", an interesting attempt has been made by E. Bickel (*Homerischer Seelenglaube*) to show that this word, — though its predominant meaning in Homer is already an abstract idea of 'life', — must have meant at an earlier stage of the language quite literally the 'soul as breath or exhalation,' and that it is precisely this original meaning of the exhalation-soul that accounts for the Homeric belief that the soul flies away from the body at death.

Old Chinese offers here an illuminating parallel. I mean the word 'ch'i' 氣, one of the commonest terms in Chinese whose exact meaning, however, is very difficult to ascertain, comprising as it does such varied senses as 'weather', 'vapour', 'physical energy', 'principle of life', 'life', 'breath', 'spirit', 'soul', etc. It is, we

may assume, a half-material, half-spiritual life-power, the *élan vital*, so to speak, working in and through all Nature, including man. In Kuan-tzū 管子 (spuriously attributed to a noted statesman Kuang Chung 管仲 who died in 645 B. C.) we read: 'So it comes about that whenever there is "ch'i" there is life, and whenever there is no more "ch'i" there is death; all living beings live through their "ch'i".' (*Shu Yen P'ien*) Similarly Chuang-tzū 莊子: 'Since life is the companion of death, and death is the beginning of life, no one knows which is the principle of which. The human life is neither more nor less than the "ch'i" gathered together; when gathered, there is life, when scattered there is death.' (*Chih Pei Yu*).

It will be noteworthy that in *Shuo Wen Chieh Tzū*, Hsü Shên 許慎 states that the original form of the letter "ch'i" 氣 is a symbolical representation of "yun ch'i" 雲氣, i. e. 'cloud-energy'. We cannot of course strain too much this explanation which is in fact too succinct to tell us anything definite about the word. But we may, on the other hand, take it fairly certain that the ancient Chinese visualized the "ch'i" as something cloud-like. That this way of representing the 'life-soul' has nothing disturbing about it may be shown by the fact that analogous ideas are often met with among uncivilized people; it is reported, for instance, that among Tyrolese peasants a good man's soul is believed to issue from his mouth at death 'like a little white cloud' (cf. E. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, p. 433). It is probable that in the case of the Chinese word "ch'i", the 'cloud', as some scholars have conjectured, symbolizes 'breath', and this moreover may well be the original meaning of the word. With rather more probability, however, the symbol may be simply picturing the ascending energy of clouds. The analysis of the ideographic symbol for 'soul', "hun" 魂 seems to afford a striking confirmation of this view. The ideogram 魂, as one sees, is composed of two parts placed side by side, one (鬼) picturing a dead person or corpse and the other (云) a cloud under heaven. This perhaps suggests that the Chinese of the earliest times thought of the soul as 'life-breath' which escapes the dying person and goes up to heaven like a cloud, a conception bearing a close resemblance to the Greek one of the "psykhē" 'flying out of the mouth' of a person at death. (cf. Sh. Koyangi 小柳司氣太, *Zoku Toyō Shisō-no Kenkyū* [続東洋思想の研究] 'Studies in Oriental Thoughts'; second series II).

Be that as it may, the close association of Breath-Life-Soul is, in this case too, very evident. We may cite here a very curious passage of *Li Chi* 禮記 'Book of Rites' where we read the following piece of conversation held precisely on this subject between Confucius and one of his disciples, Tsai Wo. 'Tsai Wo said, "I have often heard the names of "kui" 鬼 and "shen" 神, but I do not know what they really mean." The Master replied, "what is called "ch'i" 氣 is the principal function of the "shen" (i. e. the consciousness-soul), and what is generally known as the sensitive faculty is the principal function of the "kui" (i. e. the corporeal soul, or life-soul). . . . All living beings must necessarily die; once dead, they

must necessarily return to the earth. This (element which goes back to the earth) is what is called "kui". Flesh and bones perish and disappear to be transformed into the earth of the field. Only the "ch'i" of the dead ascends to heaven and assumes there a glorious form." (Chi I P'ien). It will be profitably remarked in addition that the famous commentator Chêng Hsüan 鄭玄 says of the term in question "ch'i" that it properly designates the double process of respiration: inhalation and exhalation.

We must call to mind at this point that the 'cloud'-like soul of man, according to animistic beliefs, resides not merely in the heart but dwells in various parts of his body such as his hair, skin, teeth, blood, intestines and so on. Commenting on the following words of the *Koran*: 'and when I (i. e. Allah) have fashioned him (i. e. the first man, Adam) and breathed into him of my Spirit.....', al-Baidāwī remarks that this means that 'the power of the breath premeated the cavities of Adam's body and he became alive', and adds further: 'The breathing here means properly to let the wind run through the cavities of some other person's body. The spirit "rūḥ" depends above all on the ethereal vapour "al-bukharā al-laṭīf" emanating from the heart; it becomes charged with the vital force (of the heart) and carries it through the arteries into every depth of the body.' (al-Baidāwī, *Anwār at-Tanzīl wa-Asrār at-Ta'wīl*, S. XV, 29).

It will be quite natural that the soul-stuff should, on these assumptions, be supposed to escape through every opening of the body. Saliva, sweat, tears, all are imagined to convey something of the soul-stuff out of the body. Particularly dangerous are sneezing, spitting, yawning, blowing, or touching; for on such occasions the ethereal vapour of life residing in man may be made to gush out very easily. This is most probably the reason for pious ejaculations by Moslems immediately after sneezing or yawning (cf. Zwemer, *Studies in Popular Islam*, II); the original intention underlying the use of sacred formulae here is to prevent the soul from issuing through the open mouth or nostrils. We may mention in passing that among primitive people the act of blowing is frequently counted among the most dangerous means of witchcraft. One of the earliest Meccan Surahs of the *Koran*, known as the *Chapter of Daybreak*, which is undoubtedly an anti-magical prayer for protection from fears proceeding from the evils of malignant witchcraft, depicts in a very vivid way this age-old custom:

Say: I seek refuge to the Lord of daybreak  
From the evil of whst is created  
From the evil of the darkness as it cometh on  
And from the evil of the blowers upon the knots,  
And from the evil of the envious when he envieth

The fourth verse speaking of 'the blowers upon the knot's "an-naffāthātu fi

l-'uqad" refers to the very wide-spread custom of witches who, 'in the darkness of night when it is intense', tie knots in string and blow upon them with imprecatory words in order to injure the persons they hate and envy.

We are now in a position to understand the reason why in the world of animistic practice the human voice is universally considered so sacred and awful. If the soul-stuff of man may be so easily sent out of his bodily frame, still more must this be the case with his breath, for a man's breath, as we have just seen, is, in primitive mode of thinking, even directly identified with his soul. And if, further, the soul-breath may escape through sneezing, yawning, or blowing, the same can hardly fail to happen in the act of uttering the voice; every time a man utters a voice, something of his soul is sure to go out of his body.

The primeval conception that he who breathes breathes forth from himself, breathes out of the inner substance of the soul, is far from being entirely dead among us; it has remained alive throughout the history of humanity and even today it is still living in full vigour at least in the consciousness of some of our eminent poets. *Atmen, du unsichtbares Gedicht!* 'Breathing, thou invisible poem!' writes R. M. Rilke in one of his *Sonnets to Orpheus*. Closely similar ideas are encountered in the works of Paul Claudel. For these poets, as well as for our primeval ancestors, man breathes every moment out of himself (*Wir atmen uns aus und dahin*); respiration is a continuous loss of our inner substance. Or, to speak more exactly, at every act of inhalation or in-breathing we take in something of the air—which, by the way, is, to the mind of primitive man, already fully animate, as can be seen clearly from a fragment of the Greek philosopher Anaximenes (B 2), for example, that reads: 'Just as our "psyche", which is air, holds us together and rules us, so do "pneuma" and air encompass the whole cosmos' (cf. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, Chap. V) — while at every act of exhalation or out-breathing something of our soul goes out and evaporates into the surrounding world-space (*Weltraum*).

If, in this way, even the normal process of respiration must be looked upon as something dangerous, it will be only natural that the danger should amount to the last degree when the act of exhaling happens to coincide with the utterance of articulate sounds, sounds that may be charged with some deep meaning. For with the utterance of meaningful sounds, the breath-soul is consciously and intentionally protracted towards its object. When a man utters a word loaded with meaning, he has 'something' in his mind; to put it in the phraseology of animistic psychology, his soul at such a moment becomes charged with some magical power, and this is carried on by means of the voice from the utterer of the word to its receiver. For the primitive mind, a speech sound pronounced with volition and intention immediately changes itself into a quasi-material manifestation of the soul-power. And it is doubtless in this sense that the word 'breath' "n'shāmāh" occurring in the well-known last line of the *Book of Psalms* should be understood: 'Let every

*breath* praise Yah!

It will be noted that both in the Sumerian and Hebrew myths of Creation, the creative power of the word is made to work by the life-giving power of the divine breath. As a Psalmist sings,

By the word ("dābhār") of Yahweh were the heavens made,  
And by the breath ("rūah") of His mouth all their host,

word and breath constantly stand in parallelism as the means of God's creative work. In other words, there is hardly any distinction made between word and breath, the two being closely associated with each other in the consciousness of the singer. This is paralleled by a remarkable passage of the *Koran* (*The Chapter of Women*, v. 169), where, in reference to Jesus Christ, it is proclaimed that:

The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, is but the apostle of Allah  
and His Word ("kalimah") which He cast into Mary, and a Spirit  
"rūh" (=breath) emanating from Him.

Another striking example is afforded by the *Corpus Hermeticus* (I. *Poimandres*). It is well known that both in Hellenistic and in Palestinian Judaism the conception of the divine breath and the divine Word used to be so intimately intertwined that the two could not easily be separated. It is very significant that the LXX phrase, 'a breath of God' "pneuma theou" was hovering over the water' is replaced in *Poimandres* by 'the breath-natured word' "pneumatikos logos", showing with utmost clarity that the breath and word are here completely identified. (cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, Chap. VI, 1, C.)

Speaking more generally we may say that, according to animistic psychology, the breath becomes visibly strong and powerful whenever the natural power of the soul is intensified or heightened to an unusual degree; and that any words uttered at such moments naturally become power-words. This, however, is but another way of saying that the word can behave magically only when it works in conjunction with strong breath, that is to say, only when intentionally pronounced, and this even in the case of the divine person creating the world by means of language. Even the most sinister word of malediction, so long as it is not actually uttered, discloses no objectively recognizable power; it only begins to work the moment it is pronounced. Words in general are, in primitive way of thinking, terrible entities, but they remain harmless so long as they are kept in the mind, so long as they are not carried out by the emission of the voice. We now see why so much importance is usually attached to the working of breath in the magical processes of primitive peoples in all parts of the world.

This account of the matter, however, will need some further qualification, for

it might easily invite misunderstanding as to the real nature of the magical power of the word and mislead one into thinking that verbal magic is essentially independent of 'meaning.' In fact not a few scholars, arguing from the fact that magical formulas among ancient and primitive peoples are very often characteristically composed of incomprehensible syllables, have drawn the conclusion that in the magical use of language the meanings of words play quite an insignificant role or even that they play no place at all. This, however, is evidently a hasty assertion. The importance of the breath as an indispensable factor of all genuine verbal magic should not be emphasized too one-sidedly to the detriment of the meaning factor which is no less important. Indeed, in dealing with the problem of the language of magic and sorcery we must not lose sight of the fact that if the word becomes an active force only when spoken, that is, only when brought to actuality by the outgoing breath loaded with something of the soul-power of the man who speaks, the breath, on its part, can rarely take real effect if it does not carry out articulate sounds. Simple breathing works practically no magic; in order to exert a magical influence it must be charged with voice, and the voice must ordinarily be articulate sounds, whether these be real words or some incomprehensible syllables.

It is to be observed in this connection that the so-called 'meaningless syllables' which we encounter so often in primitive incantation rituals are not, in the belief of the primitive, mere meaningless sonorous combinations; they differ also sharply from the singing of birds or animal cries in this point, namely that, whereas these latter are unanalysable or inarticulate wholes, they are really 'names', mysterious names which, though unintelligible to human ear, must be quite comprehensible to the higher spirits and gods or even to the material things, and are accordingly capable of having influence upon them. So we should guard ourselves against taking the apparently nonsensical terms so often met with in magical language as absolutely meaningless; for, far from being devoid of any meaning, the word that does not speak to human beings is here believed to possess so much the deeper meaning, comprehensible only to the beings superior to man. It is moreover extremely rare that a magic spell or ritual consists in its entirety in sheer nonsense. By far the greatest number of magical formulas and ceremonial songs of savage tribes not only stand on the basal assumption that they are understandable to supernatural agents, but are also understandable in some way or other even to human beings; for they are at the very most none other than strings of incomprehensible syllables interspersed with real words. The problem of the use of nonsensical words in verbal magic will be discussed in further detail in a later context. Suffice it for the moment to point out that nothing is *meaningless* in the magician's use of language, for the soul-power of the magician—or, to put it in a more modern way, his will-power—which, as I have said above, constitutes the very beginning of all magical act—is in this case practically synonymous with the power to 'mean' objects. It is my belief that the genuine magic of linguistic



signs begins only with the emergence of Meaning, with the emergence of symbols (as opposed to signs) which are capable of connoting as well as denoting.

## Chapter IV

### VERBAL MAGIC IN THE MIDST OF MODERN CIVILIZATION

My purpose in this chapter is to consider the role played by the magical function of speech in the present-day civilized societies. It must be stated at the outset that there can be no pretence of my discussion being exhaustive, for it would in reality require an entire volume to do full justice to this chapter. As we shall presently see, a detailed consideration of the status of magical language in modern life would of necessity call for an examination of the spiritual basis of our modern civilization in its entirety. That, of course, belongs to another place than the present treatise. The best possible thing I can do here is to sketch only a few of the most remarkable features of the phenomenon of verbal magic in modern guise. Religion, as one could naturally expect, is the domain where the magical use of language still enjoys a privileged position as being all but exclusive means of man's intercourse with the unseen world. So I shall intentionally glean my topics from those areas of human activity that lie to-day definitely outside the sway of religious ideas, for it would be more germane to my central theme if I could show the survival of elements of the primitive in the least expected places of our life.

It would seem, on a superficial view, that the civilized races of mankind to-day have completely outgrown the kind of primitive trait of mind that has been described in the preceding sections. Most of our cultured contemporaries confidently believe their definite mental superiority to tribesmen. This belief appears to have been greatly reinforced and fostered by the work of some of the authorities who have maintained that there is a basic difference in kind between the primitive's way of thinking and that of modern man, and that the logic of the primitive is an entirely different thing from the reasoning processes of the civilized. The joint witness of the leading anthropologists and ethnographers of to-day, however, seems to testify precisely to the contrary of this assumption, which is, on their view, quite gratuitous. They have become more and more doubtful about the allegedly 'essential' difference between the two types of mind, or about the existence of some such thing as 'primitive' mentality as definitely distinguished from their own. They are, on the contrary, unanimous in emphasizing that human nature is one the world around; they tend to recognize in the lowest forms the potentiality of the highest and to regard the highest to be nothing but the necessary evolution of the lowest. They assert, moreover, that this fundamental unity of human nature is to be sought not in the direction of Reason, as Descartes would have us believe, but quite in the opposite direction.

At the beginning of his *Method* Descartes wrote: Of all things, good sense (i.e. Reason) is the most equitably distributed among men. Scholars interested in the study of human nature tell us that this is unfortunately not the case. Far from being a natural endowment, reason or reasoning is, as C. R. Aldrich has pointed out, a highly artificial accomplishment even among the people in civilized countries (*Primitive and Modern Civilization* Chap. IX.). It is not Reason, but love of magic that must be recognized, if anything, as 'most equitably distributed among men', since this tendency is in fact so universally observed among mankind, whether civilized or savage, far and wide over the world and through the ages. Magic has hitherto been widely believed to be based on a fundamentally mistaken notion of causality; it is, one has often argued, ignorance of true cause-effect relations that holds primitive people to magical practices. As we saw in the foregoing chapter, this admirably accounts for such superstitious or erroneous ideas about the miraculous power of the word as are commonly entertained by primitive people. But we must not assume that these constitute the whole of verbal magic; it has another, deeper layer of structure to be taken into account if we are to gain closer understanding of the mechanism of speech.

To-day many scholars are inclined to think that the root of magic lies much deeper than it has generally been imagined. Magic, as Susanne Langer remarks, seems to be rather a spontaneous, purely natural activity springing directly from a primary human need. 'Exactly as bees swarmed and birds built nests,' our ancestors employed magic quite of themselves. (*Philosophy in a New Key* Chap. II.). But if the tendency to magical rites is so deep-rooted in human nature and comes in fact from a sheer inward need, we should naturally expect to find it at work in a variety of ways even among ourselves. It is true that the persistence of this primitive psyche is to a considerable degree obscured in the cultured modern, but that is chiefly because he has learned to build up his world-outlook on scientific grounds turning away from the actualities of his supposedly civilized life, where primitive processes are still largely used and even needed.

It is not necessary to go into the details of the enormous mass of superstitious beliefs and customs actually observed among civilized people. Anthropologists are always there to assure us how foolish and primitive we at bottom still are. Contemporary literature on ethnography abounds in striking examples of the survival, among the highly cultivated manners and thoughts of the polite world, of the primitive and superstitious ideas which originated in dim antiquity. Besides, a little attention is sufficient to reveal the so-called civilized and cultured people with their belief in mascots, amulets, charms, lucky stones, lucky numbers and so forth, conducting their ordinary activities in much the same way as the fetish-worshippers living in the uncivilized corners of the world. Frazer has compared the surface of our modern society to 'a thin crust which may at any moment be rent by the subterranean forces slumbering below', and has indicated the existence of a solid layer of

savegery beneath our feet as a standing menace to civilization. It is, then, no cause for surprise that our language faithfully reflects this state of affairs.

In language behaviour, as in various other spheres of human activity, the domain of the magical, at first of tremendous extent, has, as already hinted, become limited to a considerable degree, in proportion to the progress and propagation of scientific culture, but even to-day the people are far from having renounced all their fantastic ideas with regard to the nature of language. Quite a number of superstitious customs which took their origin in the remotest past still persist among the general public in civilized countries with scarcely abated vigour. These usages of an openly magical character, however, are in the nature of the case exactly the same as those described in the preceding chapter. In point of fact I have often referred to them there; besides, they are too obvious and too wide-spread to require support from fresh examples. So we may as well turn immediately to other phases of magical language that are more or less concealed from view, and are therefore more difficult of analysis.

I have already alluded to the ceremonial language, which is, as it were, the only authentic magical use of words still admitted in modern societies. As such, it occupies but a comparatively trivial position in contemporary social life. Its tremendous importance, however, leaps at once to the eye as soon as we direct our attention beneath the surface of society in order to plumb the depths of modern civilization. There we find the magical conception of language still vigorously living on, and exerting from there a tremendous sway over the whole domain of our practical affairs. The primeval spirit of magic still keeps reappearing persistently in new and unexpected places of our life in a variety of forms. Indeed, a brief glance at our own social institutions, beliefs, and customs will be sufficient to make us realize at once that the mingling of the magical with the ethical and the legal is far from being obsolete in the most civilized communities. Everyone knows, for example, that both the evolution of jurisprudence and the development of ethics everywhere owe a great deal to the previous existence of tribal or ceremonial law. In fact, at the level of ceremonial law there is practically no distinction between the legal and the ethical, as there is no separation there of the civil and criminal from the canon law. In Islam, the Koran is the sole source of all jurisprudence and ethics. The ancient books of law which have come down to us, such as the Codex Hammurapi, the Laws of Manu, or the Priestly Code of the Old Testament, are all collections of a great many minutest commands and prohibitions regulating the proper conduct of man in all the possible contingencies of individual and communal life. These rules are deemed by all to be divine in origin, but most of them, especially prohibitions, are, in reality, but tribal taboos attired in new garments.

From our own specific point of view however, the core of the whole problem does not lie in these historical generalities, but precisely in this point, that many of the ancient customs, with undeniable imprints of their magic origins have

preserved themselves almost intact into the midst of high modern culture, or at least have left ineffaceable traces in our legal and moral life. The normative and authoritative nature of the language of law and the language of ethics cannot satisfactorily be explained if we leave out of account the magical contexts out of which they arose, and with which they remain most closely connected.

It is to be remarked that both the creation of law and its execution require magical processes. The oath, for instance, which is still as vigorous as ever in our law courts and constitutes an indispensable element of a modern trial, is an admittedly magical act. The close relationship existing between oath and ordeal was rightly stressed long ago by Albert Herman Post. In his *Grundriss der ethnologischen Jurisprudenz*, published in 1895, he expressly states (II, § 134) that our custom of taking an oath in open court is a survival of the primitive ordeal, and that, therefore, it should, properly speaking, always be couched in the linguistic form of self-cursing. Through the magical power supposed to be inherent in his formula, the witness solemnly testifies to the absolute truth of what he is going to say, and, in case of a perjury, exposes himself to the wrath of the supreme heavenly judge whom he invokes. But there is another, more important respect in which the whole judicial procedure, from accusation to final verdict, may and must be understood as a kind of ceremonial or ritual performance. In an illuminating article entitled *Ethics and the Ceremonial Use of Language* (in *Philosophical Analysis* ed. Max Black), Margaret Macdonald has advanced strong arguments for thinking that judicial procedure is in fact a public, spoken ceremonial. Her theory, in brief, runs as follows: a trial is not a mere series of factual investigation, interpretation, condemnation or acquittal, but accusation, prosecution, defence, verdict, sentence in open court, that is, the former enacted in strictly formal manner so as to constitute a public ceremonial performance completely set apart from common life. It is significant that this ceremony proceeds as a verbal contest between the accused and his accusers, words being used as their weapons (this, be it remarked by anticipation, is a genuine survival from primitive ages, when magicians or prophets used to battle against each other by means of magical words, which were, in their eyes, weapons even more effective than bows and spears); and it is again words that determine victory or defeat in the final verdict. The verdict and sentence, she adds, are not mere factual conclusions from evidence; they are accepted as effective and binding because uttered in a special setting which gives them authority, 'akin to that of a magical formula and derived from similar source, a ceremonial performance.'

It is evident from the numerous historical and ethnographical monographs that have been written on the evolution of ethical ideas among mankind, that similar considerations apply also to the origin and nature of the language of morals. No one doubts that the innumerable prescriptions of conduct, positive as well as negative, of which ancient and primitive laws are composed, are much less ethical than ceremonial. Moral conduct as understood by the modern mind, i. e. the

merely ethical, does not really exist in primitive conditions; the morals of the primitive are the right performance of the traditional rites and the respect for the taboo. As in the case of the language of law, the ethical language owes its authority in part at least to its having sprung from a magical or ceremonial source; that is, the authoritative character of moral judgements is inexplicable without taking into consideration their former status as primitive imperatives sending their roots far down into the magico-religious consciousness of early man.

Moral judgements are usually couched in informative language 'You ought to tell the truth, 'You ought not to steal' etc.; in outward form they are indicative sentences which do adequately inform and describe something, and, as such, seem to be as capable of truth and falsehood as ordinary factual statements. Hence the strong temptation for philosophers to reduce all moral judgements (and imperatives) to indicatives, for, after all, these are the only forms of utterance that are really meaningful, and all the others are deemed more or less meaningful to the precise extent that they are reducible to indicative sentences. This kind of approach, however, is bound to fail of its purpose if only for the reason that it can never account for the authoritative character of moral judgements without smuggling in a gratuitous metaphysics of Values as supra-sensuous entities.

To remedy this defect, another group of views have recently been put forth. This new type of theory, which is usually referred to as the 'emotive' theory of ethics, and whose leading exponent is C. L. Stevenson, holds, in brief, that there are close affinities between moral judgements and commands, that, indeed, a moral judgement, like a value judgement, is nothing else than a 'command in a misleading grammatical form' (Carnap), for words are so used here as to arouse feeling and emotion in the hearer, and so to influence his attitude or to stimulate action. The emotive theory thus understood has the merit of emphasizing that moral judgements, unlike factual statements, have some peculiar power to produce active effects, but it is certainly wrong in assimilating those effects with those of ordinary rhetorical devices of language, and in fact a host of objections have been brought against it both generally and in detail. In particular, Margaret Macdonald in the above mentioned article has raised the weighty objection that in this sort of view the normative core of moral judgements must remain unaccounted for or even distorted. It is a mistake, she says, to equate the language of morals with that of lyrical poems. Commands issued, and attitudes expressed, by moral judgements, cannot be simply viewed as matters of private concern. They do arouse emotional attitudes and stimulate actions, but, unlike personal expressions of a poetical or rhetorical nature, they are public and impersonal in character and have authority. She suggests that these public, impersonal, and authoritative features which characterize moral judgements can only be adequately accounted for when we compare the language of ethics with ritual and ceremonial speech. Moral judgements, on this view, are ceremonial utterances, though with no specific ceremonies, or rather, with the whole

of man's life as a big moral rite. To use moral words or to pronounce moral judgements means to consecrate their objects, give them ritual significance, as it were, and to treat them ceremoniously. Moral words are 'the language of a rite in which we are all lifelong performers'.

The present seems a suitable opportunity for dealing briefly with the language of poetry. Reference has incidentally been made in the preceding paragraph to the emotive nature of the language of lyrical poems to mark off by contrast the 'ceremonial' or 'ritual' character of ethical language. But that does not in any way mean that the poetical use of language is free from magical associations. Quite on the contrary, poetry is in origin and spirit the very quintessence of verbal magic. As the original meaning of the Latin word "carmen" shows, from the earliest times poetry has always been incantation. Indeed nothing was so wide-spread among the peoples of antiquity than the belief in the occult powers of measured lines ("Carmina vel caelo possunt deducere lunam" Virgil) Oracles and prophesies were delivered in verse; prayers, curses and blessings, and magical formulas were usually cast in rhythmic form. Almost always religion spoke in rhythm or metre. Even at the highly developed stage of Hebrew prophetism, the inspired mouth-pieces of Yahweh were all poets; in the ancient world no prophet could hope to command a hearing unless he was a poet. The reason or reasons why the language of religion and magic has universally such close affinities with the poetic use of words will receive detailed consideration in Chapter XI. For the moment we may be content to give passing attention to the very remarkable fact that some of our greatest poets remain to this day, not only in their use of words but in their very poetic consciousness genuine verbal magicians.

It is true that poetry has lost most of its original magical flavour in the eyes of the modern reading public (and, to some extent, of poets themselves.) To the vast majority of people to-day poetic words are simply 'emotive' or 'emotional' terms; the poet uses his words in an 'emotive way'. The question as to from whence this 'emotion' is derived is usually left untouched. Most people will probably admit with Herbert Read that poetry is 'sudden transformation which words assume under a particular influence' (*Poetic Diction* in *Coll. Ess.*), but what precisely this particular influence consists in is a question for which no unanimity can be hoped for. For in our time, every individual poet or every individual critic is at liberty to establish his own standard of poetry.

It is perfectly possible, as in the case of the 'Wit-writing' of Dryden and his school for instance, to frame a definition of the process of poetry in such a way as to make it an entirely different thing from what it originally was. Yet the fact remains that for at least some of the modern poets the poetic experience is in itself a magical experience. Readers of the works and sayings of poets like Paul Claudel, Paul Valéry, or R. M. Rilke cannot, I believe, fail to be struck by the

extraordinary hold which the primeval spirit of magic still has on their minds.

Da stieg ein Baum. O reine Uebersteigung!  
O Orpheus singt! O hoher Baum im Ohr!

With these words Rilke has described and extolled the function of the poet as a verbal magician. The whole of the first piece of his *Sonnets to Orpheus* is dedicated to a description of the miracle-working power of poetry and song. Orpheus sings playing on his harp, and it moves all the beasts of the wood, the trees, the springs, and the stones to ecstatic enthusiasm; nothing can resist the enchantment of his music. In the popular tradition of the Greeks, Orpheus was a magical singer and musician from Thrace. It is extremely significant for our present purpose that the legend made him also a priest of Dionysos, or rather the real founder of the Bacchic rites, for this clearly suggests that in the beautiful Greek legend poetry was almost completely identified with magical formula. So it is too in R. M. Rilke's poetic consciousness. Poetry is—so he repeatedly insisted—*Beschwörung*; the essential task of the poet is to be a *Beschwörender*. "Dass es ein Göttliches binde, / hebt sich das Wort zur Beschwörung." For him, then, to utter poetry is a genuine magical act by which the binding and conjuring power of words is released.

This peculiar state of poetic consciousness, which we may aptly describe as Orphic, is actually very often met with in a number of eminent modern poets. It will perhaps worth our while to consider here the case of a modern poet who concentrated all his lifelong efforts on the end of creating a language of his own, entirely based on the principle of magical evocation: Stéphane Mallarmé. In the very heart of modern European civilization, this greatest poet-magician of the last century was dreaming of the ultimate possibility of an Absolute Language. Painfully conscious, on the one hand, of all sorts of imperfections which beset the ordinary language fitted only for determining the actions of every day life, and firmly believing, on the other, in the existence of the eternal Verb, i.e. the heavenly ideal of Absolute Language (*le Verbe*), he sought to remould the former so as to transform it into something like a medium through which the latter might manifest itself in all its original magnificent splendour. The ideal state, that is to say, of poetic language is, according to Mallarmé, a perfect actualization (in the scholastic sense of the word) of all the magical possibilities contained in the language of ordinary use: so perfect indeed that, when the Absolute Poet utters, for instance, the word "flower!" (*fleur*), 'there musically emerges out of the depth of oblivion [i.e. the evanescent vibration of the air caused by the utterance of the word] into which my voice sends down some contour [i.e. the physical sounds that draw in the air, as it were, the outline of a flower], something entirely different from ordinary flowers, the very Idea, sweet, never to be met with in any nosegay.' ("Je dis: une fleur! et, hors de l'oubli où ma voix relègue aucun contour, en tant que quelque chose d'autre que les calices sus, musicalement se lève, idée même et suave, l'absente de tous bouquets.")

—Introduction to René Ghill's *Traité du Verbe*.)

Commenting on this phase of Mallarmé's poetry, his disciple, Paul Valéry, declares that its absolute beauty reposes entirely on the magical power ("la vertu enchantresse") of language. In an essay devoted to this extraordinary poet, *Jl disais quelquefois à Stéphane Mallarmé* (*Variété* III), he describes in touching words his own experience of the first encounter with some fragments of "Hérodiade", "les Fleurs" and "le Cygne." It was an astonishing experience; the strange beauty of these poems suddenly ravished his soul; he was completely 'enchanted', literally 'beside himself.' Then he gives us the most penetrating analysis of this magical effect produced by Mallarmé's poetry. 'It happened', he writes, 'that this poet, the least primitive of poets, could, through the combination of words, which is unusual, strangely chanting, and, as it were, almost stupefying, through the musical splendour of verses and their unique plenitude, produce the impression of the most powerful quality of primitive poetry; that of the *magical formula*.'

'For a long time man believed that certain combinations of words could be charged with something more powerful than their apparent meaning; that these were better understood by things than by men, better understood by stones, water, beasts, gods, by hidden treasures, by the powers and springs of life, than by the reasonable soul; that they were clearer to Spirits than to the human spirit. Even death could not sometimes resist rhythmical conjurations, and tombs were often forced to release ghosts. Nothing is older, and nothing is more *natural* than this belief in the efficacy of the word; man believed that this power worked less by its exchange value than by some mysterious reverberations which it evoked in the substance of beings.'

Then he proceeds rightly to compare the language of primitive poetry with words we utter in the most solemn or the most critical moments of life, with the language of liturgy, with what is murmured or groaned at the height of passion, with words used to calm a child or soothe the afflicted, with words which attest the truth of an oath. What is common to all these forms of language is, he says, that the words are uttered in a special tone of voice. Meaning, the intelligible content, is not the essential element; it is accent, the inflection of voice which directly addresses our life rather than our mind that possesses the magical efficacy.

This last remark incidentally brings to our notice another fact of far-reaching importance that even the most ordinary words of everyday language may, when uttered in a special tone or used in an emotional setting, easily become invested with incalculable force. As is generally recognized, sounds and syllables tend to be strengthened or lengthened conspicuously when the speaker is under the influence of some strong feeling or when he aims at exciting emotions and attitudes in the hearer; his voice takes a richer tone, fluctuates, and in many cases approaches what Jespersen has called the sing-song manner of speaking. There can be little doubt that the tone in cases such as these produces the 'frame' effect; it isolates the most

banal and colourless words from the irrelevancies of everyday existence and heightens and transforms them into something extremely powerful and efficacious. This is, so to speak, a modern version of the ancient, primitive rite of ceremonial purification (cf. Chap. X). By the way, we may do well to remember that in moments of emotional outburst civilized persons tend naturally and unconsciously to relapse into primitive stages of mind.

In anticipation of what we shall come to more fully later, this occasion may be taken to remark that, from the magico-religious point of view of the primitive, objects and persons constantly pass from the common domain of the profane into the realm of the sacred, then back again from the latter state to the former, by means of the rites of purification. (cf. E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Eng. tr. Ch. I, 3) Once in the atmosphere of the 'untouchable', everything, man and object alike, becomes charged with profoundly perilous power which makes it something entirely different in kind from what it has been in the world of normal life. As one would expect, language is no exception to this rule; in the realm of the sacred all expression is sacred, every sound is full of power. In civilized surroundings, it is affectivity which plays the role of this 'sacred' realm; it invests every bit of speech that comes in with some mysterious power which may, and in many cases does, prove extremely perilous. But is this not tantamount to saying that our living speech is of a profoundly magical nature, for, as often pointed out, our linguistic behaviour, except in numerically insignificant cases of scientific, technological, or logical discourse, is largely under the sway of a myriad of emotions and passions. The language of everyday speech is literally pervaded by, and charged with the atmosphere of affectivity. Feelings, sentiments, and emotions are, as Vendryes has remarked (*Language*, Chap. IV), like a light vapour which floats above the expression of thought, and actually no linguistic expression of an idea is completely exempt from a nuance of sentiment.

Much attention has recently been given to the magical effect of emotive language. General semanticists have much clamoured against the ravages caused by the 'verbal magic' of emotive terms, which tend to become particularly harmful on the lips of a powerful propagandist. 'Emotive' terms are those words that are particularly fitted for the expression and provocation of strong feelings; those words that are apt to influence powerfully people's attitudes. It should be noted, however, that, strictly speaking, there is no separate class of words which *are* emotive. All words have, actually or potentially, feeling-tones; all words have—of course in greatly varying degrees—emotional associations for the community as well as for each individual. This means that there is practically no word which cannot be so used as to behave emotively. Some of our words are glaringly emotive, whilst in others the emotional association is, so to speak, slumbering, and does not usually enter consciousness. But invisible though it is on the surface, it is always there behind the screen and is ready to break forth at any moment. A stress laid in pronunciation



upon some word or syllable is often enough to raise hidden powers to the surface, that are capable of arousing all sorts of feelings and emotions. It would be instructive to notice in this connection that even such colourless, abstract 'logical' terms as "and", "or", and "not" etc., can, by pronouncing them in a special tone, be made to work no less emotively than those highly 'emotive' terms as "demagogue", "jingo", "scoundrel" and the like.

Hermann Ammann, in his book *Die menschliche Rede* (Bd. II, kap. III), spoke of the 'magic of everyday' (Magie des Alltags); he suggested, though himself did not undertake to develop the point in that place very far, that the affective elements of language—which in fact occupy by far the greatest part of our ordinary conversation—might be reinstated in their original status of verbal magic. Indeed, deep traces of this primitive mode of behaviour surprise us where they are most unlikely to be met with. The act of assertion, for example, which undoubtedly constitutes the very heart and core of every factual statement, is, viewed from this standpoint, neither more nor less than a survival of the primitive act of making an oath. This fact does not usually come prominently into view, but the magical force which is lurking behind the logical form is at once brought vividly before the mind's eye when the assertion is challenged, and when, in replying to the challenge the speaker gives his assertion a 'rhetorical' turn. Someone, let us suppose, who is at this moment empirically certain that it is raining, says, "It is raining." Some other person who happens to be present expresses a doubt about it or even flatly negates the proposition and replies, "It is not raining". Thereupon our first speaker gets excited and affirms emphatically that it *is* raining. It will be observed that to emphasize an assertion 'rhetorically' means to enforce it, as it were, by letting loose the emotive—i. e. magical—power contained in the word. Karl Vossler has aptly called the man who is being emphatic a 'speaking magician', and has insisted that rhetorical emphasis is an 'echo of linguistic magic and incantations.' (*The Spirit of Language in Civilization*, Chap. vii)

Perhaps it would not be out of place here to mention briefly the problem of the Chinese copula, whose origin is clearly emotive or emphatic. In the oldest period to which our historical documents take us, the Chinese language lacked anything corresponding to the verb "to be" which is so common in modern Western languages; the commonest syntactic pattern of predication which would correspond to "A is B" was simply "A B". There was, instead, an astonishing number of emotive-emphatic particles which, used singly or in various combinations, served as signs of strong assertion: "A verily! B", "A indeed! B", "A B indeed!" "A B verily indeed!", or even "A B really verily indeed!" The smallest and most 'harmless-looking particle' "yeh" 也, to whose very troublesome doings as a copula-equivalent in Chinese grammar Arthur Waley has referred in his *The Way and its Power*, is nothing more than one of those numerous particles of emotive emphasis. It is indeed an open question whether we may regard these emphatic particles as so many

equivalents of the Western copula; Wang Li (王力) has definitely denied it (cf. *Chung kuo wen fa chung t'chi tz'ü* "The Copula in Chinese Grammar" [中国文法中的繫詞] 清華學報 XII, I). At any rate they may, I think, safely be looked upon as something halfway marking a transition stage on the way from the purely emotive particle to the logico-grammatical copula. They illustrate the borderline or the transitional stage between 'rhetorical' emphasis on the one hand, and logical assertion on the other. In other words, they serve to bring out the fact that the pre-logical status of assertion has something markedly emotional about it.

Reasons of space make it impossible to deal at all adequately with the very interesting but highly intricate question as to the logico-grammatical function of those emphatic particles, nor is it possible to survey here the further development which they underwent in the course of subsequent ages. It remains simply to note that the much-discussed word "shih" 是, too, which is admittedly the sole authentic copula-equivalent in present-day Chinese, owes its origin to the common need of giving 'rhetorical' emphasis to one's assertion. This term "shih" which, roughly speaking from the fifth century A. D. onward, came to be much used as a connecting link between the subject and the predicate, i. e. as a real copula, was originally an emphatic demonstrative word (a *Zeigwort* in K. Bühler's terminology), meaning something like 'this!' pronounced in a solemn, assertive tone. It must be remembered that this word, unlike its synonyms "tz'ü" 此 and "ch'i" 其, etc., which are nothing more nor less than pure demonstratives, has a very remarkable connotation of 'right' or 'righteousness'—*Shuo Wen* Dictionary directly defines it by "chih" (right, straight)—suggesting that originally it must have had much to do with the act of asseveration, or at least with the positive act of asserting the absolute truth of one's words.

We may do well to observe in this connection that a somewhat similar case testifying to the close relationship existing between oath, assertion, and predication, occurs also in Sumerian, where the root "me" which furnishes the language with the principal forms of the verb 'to be', very frequently appears in the form [-am], and, suffixed to participles, nouns, and various other phrases, gives to the latter a remarkably strong assertive force.

"Gim nin-a-ni mu-da-di-am	lit. (The-slave-girl with-her-mistress
eri-ne lugal-ni zag-mu-da-gin-am	walked indeed!
uru-ma u sig-ni zag-ba mu-da-nad-am"	Slave with-their-master went-by-
	the-side-indeed!
(Gudea Statue)	In-my-city the-powerful-man
	caused-to-lie-down-indeed! his-
	vassal by his side.)

When this particle is still more heightened a degree by the addition of "nan-"

and takes the form of "nan-am", the sentence to which it happens to be appended assumes almost the force of an oath: "Shul-gi e-kur-na u-a-bi na-nam" (Shulgi of E-kur the nourisher most surely is).

Now to hark back to the discussion of the emphatic affirmation "It *is* raining", which has been interrupted. We must notice that the sign of affirmation, "is", is here uttered in a special tone of voice, and that this sudden change of tone makes the whole sentence something entirely different in nature from the ordinary "It is raining", and shifts it, as it were, to another level of discourse. In Bertrand Russell's phrase, the emphatic type of sentence belongs to the 'secondary language', while the ordinary affirmative sentence belongs to the 'primary language'. On his view, however, the ordinary negative sentence also belongs to the secondary language, and "It *is* raining" (emphatic) and "It is not raining" are placed on the same level because both presuppose the existence of the sentence "It is raining", which belongs to the primary language. This is clear, we are told, from the fact that "It *is* raining" is logically equivalent to "I affirm: it is raining" (or, to be still more logical, to: "the sentence 'it is raining' is true"), and "It is not raining" is logically equivalent to "I deny: it is raining" (or, "the sentence 'it is raining' is false, i. e. not true".) Thus, speaking generally, if "p" is a sentence of the primary language, both " $\bar{p}$ " and "p!" (i. e. the same form of words used as the antithesis of denial) belong to the secondary language. (B. Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, Chap. IV.) But from the view-point of the implicit 'magic of everyday', the role of emphatic "*is*" differs in an important way from that of the negative particle, for the former is openly 'rhetorical', i. e. magical, while the latter is neutral, and so must itself be uttered in an emotional tone if it is to behave in a magical way.

"Serpent!" screamed the Pigeon

"I'm *not* a serpent!" said Alice indignantly.

"Serpent, I say again!" repeated the Pigeon.

(*Alice in Wonderland*, V)

Be that as it may, what is important for our present purpose is to realize that whatever energy the so-called rhetorical emphasis has is, genetically speaking, most intimately associated with the act of releasing the binding power of words in the form of 'asseveration'. This carries us back to those for-off days when to assert something emphatically (including both affirmation and negation) literally meant to 'asseverate', that is, to declare in an unusually solemn and strained frame of mind as if standing actually before some invisible or supernatural judge. If, for instance, a man declared that he was *really* innocent, what he meant thereby may very well be represented by some such formula as this: "I swear by X: I am innocent!", though, needless to say, the sentence as it stands may appear grossly exaggerated. This original force of assertion becomes particularly apparent when we examine the ordinary

form of statement in such a language as classical Arabic, whose general structure is conspicuously emotional rather than rational. Readers of the ancient Arabic literature know that among the desert Arabs even the most commonplace type of statement tended to assume the form of an emphatic oath: e. g.

"Wa 'Ilāhi inna A la B" (*By God, verily A [is] indeed B!*)

It will be easily seen that it is not a far cry from this kind of oath to our rhetorical emphasis. Thus, viewed in the light of such genetic fact, our "It *is* raining" could reasonably be traced back to its original form, "(I swear) by X: it is raining." This asseverative part which is put before the material or content of the judgement may sometimes actually appear on the surface, as when we say "I tell you, I assure you, I bet, etc. : it is raining," but more usually remains implicit. Whether explicit or implicit, it is precisely this part which galvanize, so to speak, the main proposition and transforms it into a real living sentence.

But if such is the case, then the apparently radical difference between the sentence of primary language ("It is raining") and that of secondary language ("It *is* raining") turns out to be a simple matter of degree. For every declarative sentence, however neutral and commonplace, involves, if uttered by a real speaker in a real situation, some modicum of assertive element; otherwise it would be no living sentence at all. In dealing with the problem of the logical structure of sentence, Charles Bally (*Linguistique Générale et Linguistique Française*, § 28-35. I) has rightly remarked that every sentence consists logically of two complementary parts, which are both indispensable: the one, the assertive part, and the other, the part representing the content of judgement. The former he calls 'modus', the latter 'dictum.' He insists that the assertive part, in the majority of cases, remains hidden in the dictum. Thus, when Galileo says, "The earth turns," the indicative mood of "turns" imply, "I know, I believe, I affirm (that the earth turns)." This approach, however, seems to commit in some cases a sort of confusion between the real subject of assertion and the grammatical subject of the sentence. So in a sentence of the type "Galileo affirms that the earth turns," the verb "affirms" is construed as the modus which joins the dictum—here, the notion of the rotation of the earth—with the subject of assertion (Galileo). The theory fails to see that the assertive force of the sentence always comes from the 'belief' of the person who utters that sentence. Thus in the sentence, "Galileo affirms that the earth turns", the verb "affirms" has no assertive force, it does not vivify the proposition, it is part of the dictum; the this assertion comes, on the contrary, from the living subject who affirms sentence itself. Here too, the modus is implicit: (I affirm that) Galileo affirms that the earth turns.

At any rate, what is particularly relevant to the subject of our study is the fact just observed that even the most commonplace and simplest type of indicative sentence such as "It is raining" proves, on a closer examination, to be not in the least free

from magical associations. In its present status, or, to be more precise, so far as it is used in scientific discussions or logical exercises, the type of sentence may very well be said to have become something intellectual; one might safely state that now it can passably be used even for logical purposes. And yet, if we step outside the closed study of the theorist into the middle of the scenes of daily life and see it at work in actual living conversations, we shall be astonished to find how even this most neutral pattern of speech, which is generally supposed to be used for 'a mere statement of fact', still retains much of the magical force which it must have possessed in the remotest past. But if such be the case with the indicative sentence, with much more congruency must the same apply to those other types of speech that are in their very nature more or less coloured with shades of emotion and feeling.

All these considerations seem to have led us ever more to the conclusion that all speech may, in a certain sense, be regarded as a magical act, though, of course, this magical nature is embodied in actual uses of speech in many degrees of intensity, varying from genuine verbal magic through many grades of half-conscious, half-unconscious magical use of language (e. g. commands, wishes or volitions, words and sentences used to express or to arouse emotional reactions, etc.) down to those types of sentence which present little or no outward sign of their magical core. In other words, we must assume the existence of a magical dimension, so to speak, to all linguistic behaviour; it can be traced in diverse degrees and forms in every bit of speech on our lips, and almost in every one of the words we use in the reality of full life.

We may, I think, roughly compare the above mentioned magical dimension of speech to the Freudian realm of the 'unconscious', a sort of underground dungeon of our soul, into which all kinds of irrational beliefs, unconscious desires, and frustrated wishes are 'repressed', out of which, however, these uncouth monsters of our mind are ready at any time to break in upon the conscious world. In order to do justice to the overwhelming complexity of linguistic facts, we must not focus our attention too exclusively on the bright daylight sphere of our speech behaviour; we must study it too, as it moves and works along this dark dimension, and examine the structure of language in the light of the results obtained through this kind of approach. The importance of this way of viewing things will become evident when we come to deal with the problem of mental processes involved in linguistic meaning, which is beyond any doubt the most important and central subject of all current speculations about language. This we shall presently see.

## Chapter V

### THE FUNDAMENTAL MAGIC OF 'MEANING'

The result we have arrived at in the preceding chapter seems to suggest that before speaking of the magical *use* of language, we should rather speak of the magical *nature* of language. If, as has been shown, magic clings so tenaciously even to the most ordinary, commonplace use of linguistic symbols, if, in other words, it has penetrated and pervaded practically every phase of our linguistic behaviour, we might rightly feel prompted to the view that all human speech is essentially magical; that our words and sentences, before being utilized by professional magicians and sorcerers for their erroneous or evil purposes, are in themselves ultimately of a magical nature. Stated in this form, however, the view seems to require confirmation and justification. Can we really justify this position?

It will now be evident from what has been said that the problem of verbal magic is much more complicated than it appears at first sight. The very idea of magic itself, as far as concerns human speech, is not a simple, but a highly complex and many-sided one, and is, therefore, liable to be understood in a variety of ways. In fact, a moment's reflection will reveal that the term 'magic' has been applied by different writers on language to the most diverse linguistic facts. In order, therefore, to deal at all adequately with our specific problem it is necessary to distinguish clearly from the outset between various strata of verbal magic, and it will be advisable to lay it down upon ourselves as a rule to keep them apart and not to confound them with one another during the course of our discussion. Broadly speaking, there are at least three such strata to be distinguished: (1) the fundamental magic of meaning, that is, the notion of magic which is found embedded in the very semantic constitution of our words; (2) the practice of magic by means of linguistic signs, which constitutes verbal magic in the narrow, technical sense of the word, e. g. spells and incantations, blessings and curses, oaths, prayers, etc.; and as being between these two, (3) the 'spontaneous' magic of intense desire or emotion, which may modify even the most colourless words and particles in a very peculiar way and transform them in a moment into something charged with mysterious power. The last named stratum, which, from the perspective of modern users of language, may or may not be termed 'magic'—it may be remarked by the way that many semanticists have recently much emphasized the 'magical' nature of it—is most probably the one from which all forms of verbal magic (including those understood in the technical sense too) have ultimately orig-



inated, and thus affords us the key to the secret mechanism of our linguistic behaviour in general. But of this and many other problems which it raises in its way we shall speak in subsequent chapters. Here we are concerned only with the fundamental magic of meaning mentioned above as one of the three principal layers of magic in language.

It seems quite evident that to use the term 'magic' in this way is to use an extremely common word in an extremely uncommon sense; no one, in fact, will seriously pretend that every one of us, whenever he utters any word whatsoever, is thereby a real magician or sorcerer; it is, in other words, to apply the name 'magic' to the most ordinary, normal and workaday kind of human phenomenon in which the mind of ordinary modern man does not sense any magical association at all. This implies that only a thoroughgoing theoretical analysis can dig out of the phenomenon of Meaning its hidden magical core. But certain it is, at any rate, that there is a respect in which the meaning function of human speech may, and perhaps must, be regarded as most closely bound up with magical behaviour of man. We may recall at this point what H. Paul observed regarding a magical or animistic signification implicit in the use of the verb as such. In his *Prinzipien* (p. 89) he pointed out that the grammatical category of the verb embodies a certain kind of animation of Nature, closely akin to the primitive animation and personification of the universe which is characteristic of all mythical thinking. Nor has Paul been alone in recognizing the essential connection between magic and linguistic meaning in general. That, speaking more generally, there is something extraordinary about the meaning behaviour of the most ordinary words, that there always is something mysterious and extremely irrational clinging to the fundamental word-thing relation in such fashion that it forbids being conceived as the mere product of serene and sober intellect, has often been keenly felt and brought out in various connections by many writers on language and on human nature in general.

It is rightly maintained, for instance, by Walter Porzig (*Das Wunder der Sprache* Kap. I), that the vital experience of Meaning springs out of the realm of magic and sorcery, which is an *Urerlebnis* of man. Like the poet R. M. Rilke whose magical view of language we referred to in the preceding chapter, Porzig sees the most original function of human speech in its power of *Beschwörung*. The human will, he argues, in order to penetrate into reality provides a sentence with its meaning; the will to take possession of a thing calls forth its name. What our children achieve or try to achieve with their rudimentary words is to exercise power over the things of the world through the well-formed gestures of words. 'To mean something by means of speech is no other than a weakened form of the intention of binding it magically.' (Mit der Rede etwas meinen ist nur eine Abschwächung dieser beschwörenden Absicht, p. 157.) Whenever and wherever man is moved by the desire to get possession of a specified piece of reality he gives it a name; the name once fixed, he can at will conjure up the thing designated and exercise over

it whatever control he pleases by simply uttering the name. As P. W. Bridgman put it, language separates out from the living matrix little bundles and freezes them (*The Nature of Physical Theory*). For the modern scientific mind this has no more signification than that man, by means of the naming process of language, can single out a limited number of relevant factors and things from the chaotic mass of his sensory experience, arrest and fix them in permanent forms, getting thus a relatively easy mental control over his surroundings. But to primitive type of consciousness it means infinitely more than that; for to name, or to know the name of, a thing is, as has been shown above, to grasp the very living soul of that object. He who holds sway over the words, says Pierre Angers— he is speaking of the contemporary poet Paul Claudel—, 'exercises thereby over the beings something of the creative sovereignty of God; he calls them, he makes them present to the mind, he evokes just the state of emotion which would correspond to their presence.' (*Commentaire à l'Art Poétique de Paul Claudel* p. 281)

Ainsi quand tu parles, ô poète, dans une énumération délectable

Proferant de chaque chose le nom,

Comme un père tu l'appelles mystérieusement dans son principe,  
et selon que jadis

Tu participas à sa création, tu coopères à son existence !

(P. Claudel, *Odes*)

It seems not fortuitous that the famous Genesis story counts language among the most precious gifts bestowed by God on mankind. In the second version of Creation we see Adam given the unique freedom of giving names to the living things in the world. 'So out of the ground God-Yahweh formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them. And whatsoever the man called any living being, that became its name. Thus the man gave names to all the animals, both to the fowl of the air and to every beast of the field' (Gen. II, 19-20). The animals do not name themselves; man alone enjoys the privilege of naming them— and of course also of naming inanimate things. There is no doubt that this unique faculty of giving names to things is here regarded as the mark of man's superiority over the whole of the created world. For he who names a thing necessarily becomes the magical possessor of the thing.

This curious experience of Meaning is in no way confined to primitive people or to a very small number of those privileged persons who have somehow or other come to possess that kind of 'magistère de tous les mots' of which Claudel speaks. Genetic considerations strongly suggest that each of us must have once

experienced the amazing 'magic' of names in infancy and childhood. The analysis of the infantile formation of speech habits shows that there is a certain more or less well demarcated period in everyone's mental history during which the really remarkable discovery is made that things have names and that these names have a certain magical effect on the universe. Observers report that the child begins by playing with non-articulate verbal noises passionately and very persistently, but in an entirely aimless way; then gradually comes to notice that by uttering certain kinds of noises he can miraculously bring things into his hands. The child sees that everything he desires comes to him through the medium of words, that the utterance of them invariably produces certain reactions, that, in short, speech gives him command over the environment.

It is important to note that, as B. Malinowski emphasized in his excellent essay on *Meaning in Primitive Languages*, to the child at this stage—and to primitive Man alike—words are not so much means of expression as efficient means of action. Words are primarily used to bring things about. When the child wants an item of food he clamours for it, and it appears. 'The name of a person uttered aloud in a piteous voice possesses the power of materializing this person.' This and thousand other experiences of similar kind repeated everyday cannot fail to thrust deep into the child's mind the impression that words are really active forces, powerful enough to exercise, when released, a visible influence over various objects and actions. This experience of 'grasping' things by means of verbal noises is what W. Porzig calls 'das Erlebnis der Bedeutung', the vital experience of Meaning, as it could be called, and this it is that constitutes the very core and origin of the primitive, magical attitude towards words.

The language of children is generally recognized to be of a preeminently dynamic nature; it is in its entirety essentially active and *verbal* rather than static and *nominal*. And the suggestion may perhaps be made to appear plausible that such must have been the case with human language at the crudest and most primitive stage of its development. Now verbs, as a basic category of language, are mostly names of actions and events, (or, to speak more strictly, they possess this peculiarity about them, that they present anything whatsoever *structurally* as an action or event.) So, as one might expect, the kind of magical effect of names just referred to is much more direct and straightforward in the case of the verb which names the desired event than in the case of the noun which does not directly specify the action to be performed. This will become apparent upon even a cursory examination of the imperative form of the verb. The imperative is a very remarkable linguistic device for designating the action or event desired in so straightforward and compulsory a way that the mere mention of the action or event in that form is generally sufficient to bring about its immediate realization. Besides, the second person of the imperative consists, in a great many languages of the world, of the bare word-stem or something that approximates it,

a fact which speaks strongly in favour of the chronological priority of this form to most other linguistic modes of expression. Another proof of the primitive or archaic nature of the imperative form is afforded by the fact that ontogenetically too, imperatives are among the most characteristic speech-forms which little children easily understand and even use in the earliest stages of language formation.

It is much more important, however, to remark that the speech of children is, in itself and as a whole, governed by the principle, or better, spirit of the imperative. It is not solely real imperatives that behave in the capacity of imperatives here; indeed there are strong reasons to believe that all words as employed by children, in whatever grammatical guise they appear, show an undeniable tendency to partake more or less manifestly of the nature of the imperative. The imperative character of child language has been admirably brought out and analyzed by G. Révész in his *Ursprung und Vorgeschichte der Sprache* (see in particular 8, III C). Experiments in the field of child psychology, he holds, shows that the little child is primarily interested in actions; earlier than any other forms of expression he tends to acquire the capacity of understanding imperatives, while, on the other hand, he himself does almost nothing more than demanding things during the earliest period of verbal activity. 'Little children demand and request, but do not describe.' Furthermore, Révész goes on to say, the child at this phase of linguistic development grasps and employs any words he has heard quite regardless of the discrimination of the grammatical categories to which they belong: everything, we may say, is here made to subserve the imperative function. When he cries 'Mama!' for example, the word does not describe the presence of mother, it rather demands an action from her. It is, we are told, towards eighteen months that the intention of real naming and description begins to appear. 'If we wish to give the words of the earliest period of child language their true characterization,' he says, 'we must keep in mind that what is essential here is not to know to what grammatical category the word used belongs, but to ascertain what the function of the word in question is: that function will almost invariably be found to be that of the imperative.'

This characteristically dynamic and volitional status of infantile speech may—of course with due caution—be made a clue to the mystery of the most primitive, prehistoric state of human language. This has been done in fact by Révész. It is really remarkable that this eminent psychologist who, in constructing his theory of the origin of language, completely ignored the possibility of a magical interpretation of speech function, has nonetheless come to recognize the theoretical necessity of inserting a stage of the 'imperative-language' *Imperativsprache* between the end of the pre-verbal stage and the beginning of all linguistic evolution, as a hypothetical phase of human language with a predominantly 'imperative' character, a primitive state where all words must have been used in a markedly volitional

sense. This is of no slight significance for the dominant theme of this book; and I shall return to this point in a later passage.

Most of the authors who have dealt with the problem of verbal magic since Ogden and Richards, have tacitly or explicitly assumed that the magical attitude of man towards language is based on the belief in a certain kind of direct relation which obtains between a word and the thing it refers to—between, that is, a Symbol and its Referent in Ogden and Richards' terminology. In the above account of the infantile formation of meaning, for example, the word is regarded as something active which, being essentially in direct conjunction with the piece of reality it means, acts effectively on the thing, produces, moves, attracts or repulses it. And this imputed relation between the word and the thing is made to account for the essence of all verbal magic. Even at the final stage of linguistic development represented by the basic triangle of Ogden and Richards with its base indicated by a dotted line (suggesting that the relation in question is merely indirect and conventional,) the magical use of language is explained by reference to the erroneously and mystically assumed direct correlation between sound and reality. This, of course is true to a considerable degree. Innumerable superstitions have, in fact, sprung from the deep-rooted belief that between language and reality there exists an essential nexus. In previous chapters we have seen how primitive people everywhere tend to confuse the word with the thing, and how this tendency is responsible for a good deal in driving man to madness and stupidity. This, though, is not the whole story. For this accounts for only the 'denotative' aspect of verbal magic. The mechanism of the magic of meaning has another no less important aspect, which is much more elusive and fugitive than the preceding one, but which must be fully analyzed if only for the reason that it will perhaps provide us with a precious key to the very difficult problem of word-meaning. I mean the 'connotative' phase of meaning as contrasted with denotation.

By the 'connotation' of a word logicians usually mean roughly the complex property or the set of properties that anything must possess in order to be called by the name, while the 'denotation' of a word is all and only the things the name rightly applies too. Thus, for example, the word 'chimpanzee' denotes all the particular animals which have a certain set of properties, and it connotes this specific character shared by no other kind of animals (cf. Max Black: *Critical Thinking*. Ch. X. 3). But here we are concerned with the pre-logical status of connotation: that is, with the problem as to how it is like before it receives any kind of logical elaboration. In order to resolve the question we must go down to the very root of the process of meaning and signification.

It may be taken as fairly certain that the occurrence of connotation, thus understood in a pre-logical way, is a psychological event. Image, idea, representation, concept, or whatever else it may prove to be, the phenomenon of meaning in its entirety cannot possibly be explained, unless sooner or later the 'mental'

is introduced. What exactly it consists in we shall see later in detail. For the moment it is sufficient to recognize that the use of name-words tends to suggest or call up into mind 'something' even before we know what they precisely denote, or (what is more important) even when there is no denotatum at all. In default of a better term we may at least for the time being, call this 'something' mental imagery. That images, or other introspectible experiences evoked by words are almost always extremely vague, blurred, and indeterminate does not in any way make them unreal. On the contrary, it is this natural wooliness of connotation-imagery that makes up, for good or ill, the inner structure of word meaning, making our language, on the one hand, an infinitely subtle, flexible, and therefore very powerful, instrument to cope with the endless variety and diversity of facts, but inducing, on the other, the human mind to indulge, consciously or unconsciously, in all sorts of mischievous magics and tricks.

The triangle-scheme devised by Ogden and Richards is based on the fundamental view that linguistic meaning at a fully developed stage centres round the act of Thought; even in the case of the discussion being confined to the world of tangible objects, the relation between a symbol and the thing it stands for is only indirect; that is, words are primarily symbols for mental imagery, not for things themselves. It would be a grave mistake, however, to argue from this that in primitive or infantile speech, the triangle is reduced to its base. We must strictly distinguish between the superstitious view of language universally held by primitive people, who erroneously assume some mystical, real relation between a symbol and its referent, and the actual process of meaning activity displayed by savages and children. In the process of infantile formation of meaning sketched above, a deeper analysis would have discovered an embryo of connotation already present.

Children, we are told, constantly utter words in order to bring things into their minds as well as into their hands. This becomes remarkably evident in those not infrequent cases where verbal appeal fails; where, that is, the thing or the person the child clamours for does not appear before him. What happens here? The object meant by a word does not come out; there actually comes out, instead, something mental, the intangible duplicate, so to speak, of that object. Here we have already the beginning of that kind of conjuring up of Spirits and Souls by means of powerful words, which is so familiar to us from innumerable ethnographical descriptions of savage life. Real, tangible objects may, and very often do, fail to respond to the child's verbal appeal. But their intangible mental duplicates never fail to do so; whenever a name is called, something shadowy is sure to appear; appear where?; in the mind? or in some other place?

It must be remarked that to children, and especially to primitive people, intangible, shadowy things are nevertheless real things; nay they are even much more real and active than their visible prototypes because of their very intangible,

invisible, and wooly nature. That which may be nothing more than simple mental imagery to our mind, is, in primitive consciousness, an active force, some mysterious entity belonging to a peculiar dimension of reality which is more 'real' than our so-called reality. And it is on this kind of super-reality that words are supposed to have an essential, infallible hold. The belief that language can exercise an influence over the world of tangible, material objects may easily be shattered by everyday experience, but the belief that words have power over the invisible duplicates, the 'doubles' so to speak, of those objects and that the 'doubles' constitute a reality of higher degree seems to be deeply rooted in the human mind, and it has even given rise to many philosophic systems of pseudo-ontology. This aspect of the problem will need further discussion below.

It will be easy to see that the connotative phase of meaning plays infinitely subtler and far more important a part in the formation of verbal magic than denotation does. As far as denotation is concerned, language has but very limited resources for magic. More often than not real things and events tend to baffle the will of the speaking magician. A good many men have wondered at the fact that, in the area of linguistic activity, so many strange superstitions have flourished and still seem to be flourishing among mankind when it requires but a little sober reflection to see through the fallacies of verbal magic, to recognize that magicians are constantly exposed to the danger of being disastrously frustrated by some unexpected turn of actual events. Indeed if we try to approach the problem of linguistic magic exclusively from the denotative aspect of meaning, we will be unable to account for the really triumphant influence it has exerted over the minds and actions of men throughout the ages. The introduction of the idea of connotation, however, effects a sudden transformation of our perspective and makes the whole problem appear in an entirely different light. It may even be said to furnish the master-key for the understanding of the magical processes of language in general. For, as we shall see more fully later, it is not denotation, but connotation that makes up the very essence of the fundamental magic of meaning with which we are principally concerned in this chapter. Connotation is the real starting-point and the ultimate meeting-place of all verbal magicians, from the humblest wizard-doctors of primitive tribes to the most sophisticated philosophers of the civilized races.

There is one important point to note in this context. Connotation too, one might argue, is in itself a very poor thing: at the best, simple, mental imagery; and as such it is something vague, indefinite, and quite powerless. Certainly. But we must also bear in mind that this 'poor thing' contains a mine of hidden potentialities, which, under favourable conditions, can be developed along unexpectedly divergent lines. Combined with and supported by other forces, it may become itself a terrible force. We see the most remarkable of those supporting forces in Animism, that is, in short, man's belief in the existence of soul or spirit.

The question as to whether or not magic itself originates in Animism may be left open here. It is at any rate certain that magical habits tend to spread in wild luxuriance wherever mankind reaches the stage of Animism, and that the connotative aspect of word-meaning also begins to work in such circumstances as the most productive matrix of verbal superstitions. For, as will easily be seen, with the advent of animistic beliefs what has been simple imagery transforms itself into some mysterious Spirit or Soul to be viewed with fear and awe. The utterance of a name no longer calls up the simple mental image of the object named, but calls out invariably the living-soul of it, which, though shadowy and invisible, is palpably there as an awful something-I-know-not-what summoned up from the unfathomable depth of oblivion. In strict theory, this would belong already to the stratum of standardized magic and not to that of the fundamental magic of verbal meaning which constitutes the main topic of the present chapter. But as it brings out better than anything else the hidden magical potentialities of connotation to which reference has been made, and as it allows us, in this way, to get a real insight into the mechanism of connotative magic, we decide it best to begin with an examination of 'connotation' against the general background of the explicitly animistic belief in separate souls.

In the celebrated opening scene of Goethe's *Faust*, we are made to witness the learned Doctor who 'has turned himself to magic, if haply through the power of Spirit and Speech many a hidden mystery may be revealed,' trying to conjure up the terrible Earth-spirit. He opens a book of magic, and his eye lights upon the secret symbol of the Earth-spirit.

A shudder

Down-wafted from the vaulted gloom

Lays hold on me!

Spirit conjured, that hovering near me art,

Unveil thyself!

(Eng. tr. Albert Latham)

Faust takes up the book and pronounces in a mysterious way the symbol of the Spirit. A ruddy flame flashes, and the Spirit appears in the flame.

Sp. Who calls to me?

F. Appalling Apparition!

Sp. Thou'st drawn me here, with might and main,

Long at my sphere hast sucked in vain,

And now —

F. Woe's me! I may not bear the vision.

This picture, though of course a piece of literature, is strangely true to the ethnographical facts which we know from other sources, and depicts the heart of the magical process of conjuration in its most explicit form. By way of comparison I shall give another example of magical invocation taken, this time, not from literature but from the well-known Maqlū-texts of Assyria, a vast collection of real magic formulae depicting in the most vivid way the curious magical practices of an ancient people.

Here is a man who feels himself assaulted and deeply wounded by the evil influences liberated and sent forth by some unknown sorcerer or sorceress who secretly has aimed at his ruin. But he himself is versed in the art of magic, black and white. So he begins by conjuring up the occult powers of darkness (1-3); he then proceeds to complain in a piteous tone of his present misery caused by the black magic of his enemy (4-12), asks them to come and see his present state (13-14), and appeals to them to bring terrible retribution upon the malignant and deceitful wrongdoer (15-16).

"én al-si-ku-nu-shi ilāni mu-shi-ti	(Incantation: Ye have I conjured up, Gods of night,
it-ti-ku-nu al-si mu-shi-tum kal-la-tum kut-tum-tum	With ye have I called up Night, the veiled bride.
al-si ba-ra-ri-tum qab-li-tum u na-ma-ri-tum	I have called Evening Twilight, Midnight, and Daybreak.
ash-shu kashshaptu u-kash-ship-an-ni	For a sorceress hath cast a spell upon me,
e-li-ni-tum ub-bi-ra-ni	A demon hath bound me,
ili-ia u ishtar-ia u-shis-su-u eli-ia	They have removed from me my God and my Goddess.
eli a-me-ri-ia am-ru-us a-na-ku	To my onlooker I have become woeful,
im-di-ku la ša-a-lu mūsha u ur-ra	I have no rest night and day.
qu-u im-ta-na-al-lu-u pī-ia	They have filled my mouth with magic knots,
u-pu-un-ti pī-ia ip-ru-su	With flour locked up my mouth,
mē mash-ti-ti-ia u-maṭ-ṭu-u	My drinking-water they have diminished.
e-li-li nu-bu-u khi-du-ti si-ip-di	My jubilation is lamentation, my delight affliction.
i-zi-za-nim-ma ilāni rabūti shi-ma-a da-ba-bi	Come near, ye great gods! Hear my complaint!

di-ni di-na a-lak-ti lim-da	Do me justice, take notice of my state!
e-pu-ush šalam kashshapi-ia u kashshapti-ia	I have prepared the image of my sorcerer and that of my sorceress,
sha e-pish-ia u mush-te-pish-ti-ia	Cf my wizard and of my enchantress;
ash-kun ina shap-li-ku-nu-ma a-dib-bu-ub dini	I have placed them under your feet, I bring in my lawsuit
ash-shu i-pu-sha lim-ni-e-ti ish-te-'a la ba-na-a-tim	Since she hath done wrong, hath contrived evil plans,
shi-i li-mut-ma a-na-ku lu-ub-luṭ	May she die, may I remain living!
kish-pu-sha ru-khu-sha ru-su-u-sha lip-pa-ash-ru."	May her sorcery, her spells and her poisons be dissolved!

—(Gerhard Meyer: *Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlū*, 1937, Tafel I)

It is no mere coincidence that many of the Maqlū-texts—and indeed we might say, incantations in general—begin with an invocation e.g. "iršitum iršitum iršitum-ma" (Earth, earth, ay earth!), "rittu-ma rittu rittu dannatu sha ameluti" (Hand, ay hand, mighty hand of the man [i.e. of my enemy wizard]), or "Thou who hast enchanted me! Thou, who hast bewitched me! Thou, who hast cast a spell upon me! Thou, who hast oppressed me! Thou, who hast seized me! etc." It is not rare to find a whole spell composed of an enumeration of names solely. Names, in primitive thinking, are such wondrous things. And of course in order to throw a spell over a person or a thing, it is essential to have the soul of that object invoked out of the realm of darkness.

Now it would be erroneous in the extreme to suppose that the process of magical conjuration here described, being essentially a habit of savage people at the animistic stage, must have completely ceased to work among modern cultured people. For it seems highly probable that Platonic idealism has much to do with this kind of verbal magic. Reference was earlier made to the remarkable case of the French poet Mallarmé, who formulated in his famous 'Je dis fleur!—' the fundamental principle of poetic Platonism. The Absolute poet, we are told, whose complete mastery of words enables him to transform the ordinary defective language into some miraculous medium through which the Heavenly Verb manifests itself in all its starry magnificence, could by the mere utterance of the word 'fleur!' conjure up the Absolute Flower, 'the very Idea, sweet, never to be met with in any nosegay,' 'something radically different from ordinary flowers.' This contention, whether it be true or not, is enough to raise at once our suspicion that there may be a close connection between Platonism, at least in its crude and popular form, and the belief in conjuring power of the spoken words. The



Platonic theory of universals, in so far as it is a doctrine maintaining the existence of eternal Forms or Ideas behind the veil of transient appearances may be said to be based in the main on the abuse of the meaning function of language.

Furthermore, a moment's reflection will show that what is involved in our use of even the most commonplace and ordinary general words, such as dog, cat, and house, is, as far as its connotative aspect goes, essentially the same as what was observed in the magical processes of invocation described previously. True, from the view-point of the present chapter, they are all extreme cases, and to that extent they tend to represent the ordinary behaviour of our words in an unusually fantastic, deforming light. But, on the other hand, they serve to bring out the more vividly the hidden magical core of connotation and to make its most salient features loom larger than usual, which, left in normal conditions, might probably remain unnoticed. So we may profitably assume that whenever we happen to call the name of something—whether for the first time or not—we are doing exactly the same thing as doctor Faust when he calls up the Spirit of the Earth by uttering a mysterious formula, though of course on an infinitely small scale, too small indeed to be perceptible even to ourselves.

However that may be, it seems straightforwardly true that all words through their very nature as symbols are capable of conjuring up something in our minds. The spoken word evokes in the mental system of the hearer the picture, the image, the concept (simple or complex), the emotion, the reasoning, or whatever else it may be, which is occupying the mind of the speaker. This process of mental evocation, then, we can, safely take as the most fundamental act of verbal magic, though from the ordinary man's point of view it may perhaps be too fundamental or commonplace to be called 'magic' at all. At any rate, a little more thoroughgoing analysis will at once show that many, if not all, of the 'magical' effects of language which have recently received much public attention can best be explained as simple variations or intensifications of this fundamental magic of connotative meaning. We shall now turn to the consideration of this problem.

Now, to go directly *in medias res*, the problem before us is to investigate what precisely this 'something' is, which is brought before the mind by means of a linguistic symbol. What, in other words, is the inner structure of connotative meaning? The question, it is evident, turns out to be extremely difficult to answer, if we reflect that we are being concerned here with the natural, pre-logical status of connotation before it has received any kind of theoretical elaboration. For connotation in this sense is after all something of a mystery. It is of course always possible to try to get rid of this irrational element on the ground that it is not susceptible of scientific observation. Thus behaviourists and the extensional logicians have, as is well known, attempted in their respective province of study to abolish in the name of Science all connotative elements and to dissolve the latter altogether into denotata. Psychology as a science and logic as a science,

so they have argued, should not commit the folly of being led into futile discussions about such unscientific things, if things they are, as consciousness, images, or ideas. Only recently Charles Morris proposed to the linguists a wide program for erecting the science of linguistics on the basis of his 'behavioral' semiotic. (*Signs, Language and Behavior*, VIII, 2) This would mean the setting up of a semiotically, i. e., 'behaviorally' grounded metalanguage in terms of which we may talk scientifically about all linguistic phenomena without making any use of mentalistic terms.

Now I am not in any way going to deny that there is much truth in their arguments. But, however much we may sympathize with their intention of promoting intelligibility and avoiding confusion, we must also admit that in attempting to rid linguistics of the mental in the interest of scientific precision, behaviourists make a satisfactory theory of language impossible. The carrying out, for instance, of the program proposed by Morris thoroughly and consistently would, I believe, make us arrive at a false view of how our words operate in actual life. That is to say, the phenomenological analysis of meaning function of language would be impossible within the framework of scientifically determinable physical facts alone. It would seem that we cannot evade the difficulty by declaring that connotation is a mystery not permissible in any science and by simply discarding it in this way. On the contrary, any phenomenologically minded linguist should try to clear up this mystery which clings to the very nucleus of word-meaning.

One of the main reasons why behaviourists deliberately avoid all use of mentalistic terms in erecting their own metalanguage is, as we have seen, that the mentalistic categories generally recognized as such are all too ambiguous and elusive to allow of any scientific treatment. And no doubt there is a fairly plain respect in which they are right in their contention. In fact experience shows that human language begins with very vague syntheses. It is common knowledge among child psychologists that the early experiences of children are largely of undifferentiated wholes.

As R. I. Aaron has pointed out in his work *The Theory of Universals* (Ch. X), what the infantile mind is disposed to think when a name, say 'house', is mentioned in its presence is a vague, unanalysed *Gestalt* which is very often surrounded by an aura of impressions, emotions, expectations etc., to make it all the more complicated and unintelligible. But, for good or ill, this state of affairs is in no way confined to child psychology. Even in the later stages of intellectual development, the undeniable advance towards increased discrimination and differentiation does not seem to prevent the ordinary man's use of general words from being largely based on the occurrence of such unanalysed—and perhaps unanalysable—mental wholes. The great majority of the so-called 'concepts' of daily life which we have acquired somehow or other through innumerable workaday experiences are, before we begin to elaborate them for logical or scientific purposes, of the vaguest kind. They are fuzzy, undetermined and blurred, lacking the clear-cut

outline and the precise details which usually characterize the actual objects of sense-perception; add to it that they are in most cases floating in a hazy emotional mist. It is, to put it crudely, with such monstrous conglomerates in which a host of various indeterminate elements are inextricably bound up with each other, that we find our words ordinarily associated.

Most people tend to assume that, since they do manage to use general words in daily life successfully, they must know the precise meaning of those words. The most elementary kind of introspection is sufficient to show that this is a mistake; that there is, in reality, no such thing as one precisely defined meaning attached firmly to any of the general words we use. Quite contrary to what one might suppose at first, it is just because our words are defined with such a degree of looseness that they can be used intelligently in our ordinary thinking and speaking. According to Hume, whose doctrine Aaron has aptly called the Disposition or Propensity theory, the hearing of a name brings before the mind of the hearer a great many ideas; in addition to the central idea, it 'revives' or 'raises up' a certain custom, and this custom once awakened, the mind becomes ready to recall various other ideas. Not that these become 'really and in fact present to the mind, but only in power; nor do we draw them all out distinctly in the imagination, but keep ourselves in a readiness to survey any of them, as we may be prompted by a present design or necessity.' Hume's purpose here seems to be to argue that what is evoked in the mind by the hearing of a name-word is not merely vague and indefinite but also extremely complex. The uttered word stirs our mind; a mass of heterogeneous elements belonging to various psychic layers are awakened from their sleep; some are actually brought before the conscious mind but many of them remain just below the threshold of consciousness, ready to crowd in at any moment, making their presence felt, and forming, in this way, a more or less vaguely illumined semantic fringe.

Now all those indeterminate elements that are awakened and 'spread out in our minds' in part actually and in part only potentially, are generally considered as something largely irrelevant, or at least of secondary importance, in the semantic constitution of the word; they are, it is often held, nothing but overtones of meaning, secondary implications, and emotional colourings which float over and above the central referential meaning. This, however, seems to be an illusion. Outside the realm of strictly scientific discourse, our words generally have no sharply focussed semantic core. True, in order to be capable at all of being used with a fair amount of success in ordinary communication, a name-word must possess a nucleus of referential meaning, out of which a 'concept' as a solid core of ideal content may be developed by a sort of intellectual hyper-refinement. That the cognitive element is of supreme importance as a constituent of the connotative meaning no one will deny. But it is not the sole constituent. Nor can we be absolutely sure that it is the most important, primary element, while all the others

are at most only of secondary significance. That is surely not always the case at the level of daily life. The natural, pre-logical status of connotative meaning is rather the unanalysed whole of multiple elements fused and funnelled somehow or other into a kind of loose but vital unity. Connotation in its natural essence, we might say, is a meaningful, recognizable whole, but it is a whole composed of astonishingly diverse elements. The phenomenological analysis of connotative meaning must start from this fundamental fact. In the following chapters we shall take up connotation as a specific topic, analyze it phenomenologically into its principal components, and see how each of them contributes in its own way towards bringing about the fundamental magic of Meaning.

## Chapter VI

## THE HYPOSTATIZATION OF THE CONNOTATUM

In order to deal successfully with such an elusive thing as connotation, it would be wise to begin by classifying its heterogeneous constituents and bringing them under certain well-defined rubrics. As a first rough-and-ready approximation, I propose to analyse the content of connotative meaning into four *prima facie* components: (1) referential, (2) intuitive, (3) emotional, and (4) structural. We shall see that each of these four aspects contains specific potentialities which may, if fully developed, easily give rise to a variety of remarkable techniques of genuine verbal magic.

Let us first consider the reference-component. Surely the referential aspect, being admittedly the only cognitive constituent of connotation, is, as we have just seen, generally supposed to constitute the solid, conceptual core of word-meaning. It is beyond any doubt true that the natural working of the referential function of language itself presupposes in every one of the name-words used the existence of a relatively persistent core of meaning which synthesizes the various semantic constituents together into a recognizable whole. It must be noted, however, that it is extremely doubtful if this allegedly persistent referential core is as hard and solid as it appears at first sight. The apparent solidness seems on the contrary due to an illusion generated by the very natural confusion of connotation with denotation, that is, in this case, indirect with direct reference to objects. Connotative reference, we must remember, is by definition indirect signification, and indirect signification is always characterized by vagueness and wooliness even when the medium is a logically elaborated concept. This fact, which is in itself almost a truism, tends to be overlooked in linguistic as well as logical discussion.

Most of the ordinary thing-words and process-words (and even relation-words) which we are accustomed to manipulate quite significantly without troubling ourselves about their nature, have been learned by the method of ostensive definition, that is to say, by the method of pointing with the finger (or some of its equivalents) accompanied by words. The learning of language, at least at its earlier stages, is in this way largely done by confrontation with real objects, real relations. This means that those words which we have learned ostensively have physically determined or determinable referents as their denotata. And so long as we are content with speaking or thinking by means of such empirical words alone no suspicion is likely to be aroused as to the very puzzling nature of

connotative meaning.

When, for example, looking at a table, we recognize it as the thing usually designated by the word 'table', and actually utter the word in reference to that object, everything appears to be clear and distinct; the *meaning*, i. e. the thing designated by the word (referent) is as solid as anything can be, for it is a real piece of furniture in all its tangible concretion. Now this type of experience, repeated at every moment of our daily life, may very well leave the impression that the word has a solid core of meaning, and this impression may further be carried over surreptitiously into the connotative aspect of word-meaning. In other words, we may easily be led into believing that the word, 'table', even when uttered in the absence of the empirical referent; can and does bring before the mind the *concept* of the table, which is not only reliably solid and persistent, but may perhaps be immutably fixed or even eternal and transcendental. As one can easily see, from this kind of belief in the existence of immutable concepts as mental entities it is but a little step to the *ante rem* theory of universals. Indeed, at all levels of linguistic thinking, ranging from that of daily life to that of the most serious metaphysical speculation, it has produced, and is producing, an endless number of 'bogus' entities.

What extravagant superstitions it can generate when combined with Animism we have already seen. Indeed, well-nigh half of the mad practices and beliefs of primitive people described in Chapter II may be said to have their ultimate source here. The very nucleus of all animistic belief, i. e. the belief in the existence of separate Souls which continue to exist even after the destruction of their bodily frames, seems in the last resort to be a product of the very marked tendency of the human mind to confuse connotation with denotation, or rather to project mental contents on to the external world, making, thus, out of them self-subsistent entities. In the *Rigveda*, for example, it is possible to trace almost step by step the rise of abstract deities out of divine epithets and abstract nouns. Thus we see "Dhatr" (creator), "Dhartr" (supporter), "Netr" (leader), "Prajapati" (lord of creatures) "Viṣvakarman" (all-creating) etc., originally epithets of older gods, gradually come to acquire an independent value as names of individual deities. Such abstract nouns as "Aditi" (liberation), "Ṛaddha" (faith), "Manyu" (wrath), "Anumati" (divine favour), etc., are formed into independent entities, personified, and hymns are addressed in their worship. The transition from Animism to Animism, that is to say, from Mana-worship to Spirit-worship, must have been definitely effected when and where man first invented the word for the 'soul' or 'spirit'. Nor are we to suppose it confined to those far-off days when our ancestors were living in the stage of primitive simplicity and savagery. Both in East and West, even after people had passed far beyond the animistic stage, the belief in the hypostatized Soul continued to exert a tremendous influence on the human mind. Furthermore, even a good deal of controversy has been wasted in



philosophical thinking as to, for example, whether the Soul, thus conceived as a super-normal or metaphysical entity, has 'separate parts', and—in case it does,—how many distinct parts it consists of, etc. The notion has gradually attenuated itself, to be sure, and today, at least among philosophers of the Empiricist school, what used to be the disembodied divine soul is no more than the name of a non-entity. But there are hundreds of thousands of people who still cling to the notion.

The case of the Soul, though in itself a very telling example, is, we must remember, but one manifestation of the ubiquitous and very persistent tendency mentioned above, which is always ready to crop up everywhere in the verbalized way of thinking. The plain fact appears to be rather simple; it comes to this: whenever a name-word is uttered in the absence of the object, it tends to make the hearer *think* or *feel* as if he were in the presence of the object; in other words, by making the object mentally present, it tends to cause the hallucination that the thing-meant, whatever that may be, really existed. Since our early experience with language almost always warranted the actual existence of anything whatsoever named by a word, we have, it would seem, fallen unwittingly into the bad habit of expecting a substantival entity to exist whenever we hear a general word uttered. However that may be, it is a historical fact that not only ordinary men but even the profoundest philosophers have very often attributed to the imaginary sphere of hypostatized connotations a special reality of its own. Besides, from the viewpoint of the traditional ontology which recognizes *potentia* as a special manner of existing as distinguished from *actus*, there is certainly a sense in which there is no essential difference between the idea of the object X existing and the idea pure and simple of the object X, for, as Kant emphasized in his criticism of the ontological argument, it is impossible to represent an object without attributing to it a certain amount of existence, be it that of a mere possible. This means that by the very fact of being represented, the object X has already gained some kind of existence, for it does exist at least as a mere possible. And the possible existence of an object once posited, it is but an easy step from there to our erecting that possible object into a real object. A huge number of such pseudo-entities are thus generated; they are then supposed to live in a real world of their own; in this way the Platonic realm of Ideas comes to being.

In his two important works *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Ch. V, § 2) and *Definition* (Ch. VI § 1–13) Richard Robinson has shown how unfortunate it was for the history of Western Philosophy that it began, so to speak, with the Socratic question of the form 'What is X?' since it was 'the vaguest of all forms of question except an inarticulate.' The What-is-X? question, as a request for a definition, was first taken in Plato's early dialogues as the search for an identical meaning in all the actual applications of a name-word. This is to forget the basic fact that all words are by nature ambiguous, and that this applies not merely to general words and abstract terms but also to the so-called logical terms. (See the very interesting

chapter on 'Ambiguity in Language' in John Holloway's *Language and Intelligence* Ch. IX). The assumption that our words are univocal is central to the theory of Ideas developed by Plato in his early and middle dialogues. 'What is piety?' (*Euthyphro*), 'What is virtue?' (*Meno*) 'What is justice?' (*Republic*) 'What is the soul?' (*Phaedo*), etc.—all these questions explicitly assume that since various (and apparently very divergent) things are habitually called by one and the same name, there must be one and the same thing which is invariably meant every time one uses the term. The man and the woman, if they are to be good, both need the virtue; the young and the old likewise. Indeed all those who are good become good by partaking of the same virtue. And then? The original search for an identical meaning of a word thus develops most naturally into the search for the Essence, for the mistaken assumption of the univocity of word-meaning involves in itself a certain sort of realism as opposed to nominalism. Aristotle defined definition as the statement of the essence of a thing. That is to say, the correct answer, if there be such, to the What-is-X? question is to give the ontological essence of X, which is in fact simply inexistent in the sense intended. In short, both Plato and Aristotle mistook the connotative meaning of a word for a metaphysical reality (see in particular the analysis of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Z 4–6 by Robinson in *Definition* p. 154; see also Léon Brunschvicg, *Les Ages de l'Intelligence* p. 66–66).

The mechanism of this hypostatization of meaning will come out more clearly if we alter the example and go to those cases where the word used means something that never occurs or that does not exist in the real world as we experience it: e. g. the so called secondary or imaginative concepts representing fabulous or mythological beings such as 'unicorn', 'dragon', etc., or those mental constructs containing a downright self-contradiction such as 'a round square', or again the idea of the Absolute Nothing. In the last of these cases in particular, there is in the very nature of the matter evidently nothing to be imagined, nothing to be represented, nothing even to be conceived. The idea of an absolute absence or void is, as Bergson so brilliantly showed in *L'Evolution Créatrice*, either a mistaken and misleading substitute for partial nothingness or a self-destructive pseudo-idea, for the absolute annihilation of everything would of necessity involve destroying the very mental operation by which this idea is formed. And yet, curiously enough, when we hear the word 'Nothing', we feel as if we had actually the image of 'Nothing' in our mind. We are prone to suppose that there *is* something corresponding to the word, and this something may again very easily be projected on to the external world to become the terrifying phantom of the *Néant*. This process of reification once completed consciously or even unconsciously, it becomes feasible for us to treat 'Nothing' as if it were 'Something' and to speak, for instance, of 'encountering Nothing' (*Begegnung mit dem Nichts*), as some existentialists do, in just the same way as a mythological hero encounters

a dragon. Heidegger's 'nothingness of Nothing' (*das Nichten des Nichts*) as the ultimate source of all negation is a good example in point. 'And what about this Nothing?,' he asks himself in his famous lecture '*Was ist Metaphysik?*' (1929), 'Does Nothing exist only because there is Not, i. e. Negation? Or is it just the other way round? Do Negation and Not exist only because there is Nothing?' (Gibt es das Nichts nur, weil es das Nicht, d. h. die Verneinung gibt? Oder liegt es umgekehrt? Gibt es Verneinung und das Nicht nur, weil das Nichts gibt?) And in answer to his own question Heidegger declares that Nothing is the origin of all negation, not the other way about; that Negation occurs through Not, which, in its turn, arises through the nihilating activity of Nothing. Here, in spite of all that he says against taking it as an object that *is*, Nothing is clearly conceived as a sort of transcendent substratum which is eternally prior to all being and on which all reality is extended as an embroidery on a carpet. (cf. Carnap, *Überwindung der Metaphysik*, Erkenntnis, Bd II; see further Alfred Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, Chap I.)

The problem of negation is in itself a huge topic, the detailed consideration of which is no doubt beyond the scope of the present treatise. Nor have I any intention of maintaining that it is possible to reduce the ontological problem of not-being to a mere linguistic problem. The point I should like to make is only that negation, at least as a linguistic phenomenon, can never be sufficiently accounted for without introducing some sort of mental activity, an element of mental construction or fabrication. For there is in point of fact no negation to be met with in the world of 'things'. As Bergson maintains, a purely empirical and passive mind, docilely keeping step with experience, could never receive an imprint of negation; for such a mind there would be no nought, even partial or relative. Negation comes in with consciousness. And once formulated in words, it becomes symmetrical with affirmation; it causes the illusion as if it affirmed an objective not-being, no less objective and real than the being affirmed by affirmation. The fact has been admirably brought out by Jean-Paul Sartre in his account of *l'être-pour-soi*, i. e. human consciousness claimed to be endowed with the peculiar power of nullifying (*néantiser*) as opposed to *l'être-en-soi* which is full and compact. Only the consequence which he draws from a sophisticated elaboration of this basic distinction is as fantastic as anything can be: 'Nothing' is the Absolute. (cf. F. H. Heinemann: *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament*, Ch. VII, 3). It would be natural to suppose either that the philosopher dazzled by the brilliancy of his own logic, has himself fallen victim to the magical enticement of the word, or else—which is more probable—that he is deliberately and intentionally attempting to throw a spell over his reader. In any case this reveals the extreme danger to which one is exposed, when one begins to manipulate negation and negativities at the level of verbal thinking.

There is another way of formulating the part of mental fabrication involved in negation, which is the way taken by modern logicians; it consists in empha-

sizing the 'secondary language' character of negation. Reference was already made in an earlier chapter to Bertrand Russell's thesis that negation presupposes the existence of the object language or a language stratum a degree lower than that to which negative words belong. Two propositions 'there is cheese' and 'there is not cheese', though apparently referring directly to the objective world, and therefore seeming to stand exactly on the same footing, belong in reality to two entirely different levels of discourse, for the latter proposition is not based upon our immediate sensible experience in the same sense in which the former obviously is. In Russell's terminology, there is a definite empirical occurrence which is seeing cheese, but there is no occurrence which could be described as 'not seeing cheese', for one can see what each thing is, but not what it is not. If, after having looked at everything in the larder, you say, 'There is no cheese in the larder', you have *judged* this, you have not *seen* it. (*An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* Ch. IV, p. 73). This is to say that a negative proposition always involves the rejection of a pre-existent word or of a suggested connotation. Disappointed expectation is what brings NOT into our lives, writes H. H. Price in *Thinking and Experience* (Ch. V.) Even at the level of pre-verbal thinking, negative signification is said to be unable to occur *in vacuo*. If, speaking generally, X is to operate as a sign of not-B, there must be something about the X situation which suggests the thought of B. There occurs a clash between what we have been expecting (B) and what we actually experience (A), and this causes the negative experience of not-B. It will be easy to see that this is much more the case with negation at the level of verbalized thought. The clash between the word 'cheese' or its connotation that we have already in mind and what we actually see is what makes us say, 'This is not cheese'. Or, if we take into account the fundamental fact of the co-existence of a listener with the speaker in linguistic phenomena in general, we may say with A. H. Gardiner (*Speech and Language*, § 72) that, genetically if not psychologically, negative statement is the affirmative statement of a real or supposed speaker into which the listener's exclamation of refusal has been incorporated. Thus while 'He is rich' simply affirms, 'He is not rich' would imply, on this view, 'You may have thought he was rich, but he is not.' (§ 73) At any rate, in order that we might say 'He is not rich', the affirmative sentence 'He is rich' must be reproduced as a whole so as to act as a basis for a secondary judgement.

Nor is this way of viewing negation something new in the history of human thought. Aristotle already seems to have held some such opinion; at least he emphasizes in more passages than one the essential priority of affirmation ('The affirmative proposition is prior to and better known than the negative, since affirmation explains denial and is prior to it, just as being is prior to not-being' *Anal. Post* I, 25, 87 b, 33; 'The first class of proposition is the simple affirmation, and after that, the negation' *De Inter.* 17a, 8-9—the word 'first' [*prōtē*] must be taken here in the usual Aristotelian sense of 'primary' or 'primordial'). But there was

too much of a realist in Aristotle for this basal conception to be developed in the direction indicated above. In India, in the Golden Age of civilization, literature and philosophy (Vth. century A. D.) the Buddhist logicians greatly stressed the 'syllogistic' or 'hypothetical' nature of negative propositions. In opposition to the then prevailing opinions which tended to make in some way or other a sort of Being out of not-Being, Dharmakirti, for instance, tried to show that it is against the very essence of perception to perceive something non-existent; that not being is merely hypothetical and that what is generally called not-being is in reality a complex mental workmanship, consisting as it does in the representation of the real substratum (i. e. a given place) plus that of an imagined object which would have been perceived if it had been present in that place. The idea of an absent waterpot, for example, is nothing more than its hypothetical perceptibility in an expected place. (cf. Th. Stcherbatsky: *La théorie de la connaissance et la logique chez les Bouddhistes tardifs*, Fr. tr. Ch. XVI.) Among European logicians Sigwart appears to be the first to have put forth a similar theory. We might also mention the name of Bergson who insisted on the 'subjective character' of negation arguing that it springs from the disappointment of a real or imaginary expectation, and analysed negative propositions of the type 'A is not B' into two principal thoughts, viz. (1) that one might believe that A is B, (2) that, however, B is replaced in fact by a certain indeterminate quality X.

But even today there are still many among first-rate thinkers who would not subscribe to this kind of opinion. Morris Cohen, to give one instance, in *A Preface to Logic* (p. 34) asserts that the assumption that negative statement has no direct reference to the objective world but involves the rejection of a suggested idea, is based on a confusion. There is, on his view, no good reason for denying that negative and positive judgements are correlative, for, he says, we can very well refer to one and the same state of fact in both ways, positively and negatively; there is no difference in objectivity, for example, between saying 'These lines are parallel' and saying 'These lines do not intersect.' This criticism, however, seems to be itself based on a confusion or rather on an imperfect analysis of verbalized thinking. We must note that, at the level of thinking in or with words, 'not intersect' stands in a negative-positive opposition to 'intersect', not to 'parallel'; we can not say 'The lines do not intersect' without reproducing in its entirety the positive statement 'The lines intersect'.

All this may seem an entirely useless digression. It has been necessary, however, to insist on the 'secondary language' character of negation in order to bring out the more clearly the fictive, or we might say, magical power of NOT. If it be true, as J-P. Sartre has held, that in the world of *êtres-en-soi* there is no negativity, and that the latter element comes only from human consciousness which is in itself something negative, I may, perhaps, not be suggesting too fantastic an idea in speaking of the magical working of negative terms. Indeed, we might go

even further and say that, since the positing of a simple (positive) idea in the form of the connotation of any word may, as we saw a few pages back, itself be regarded as a magical act in that it is in a certain sense a sort of conjuring up of an invisible power, the negating of that positive idea will be, so to speak, doubly magical. To negate a word or a complex of words would be, on this interpretation, to try to wipe out what one has just written; or to use magical terminology, it would be equivalent to the act of repelling or warding off a spirit one has just called up by uttering its name; it is to try to conjure up a spirit and to conjure it away almost at the same time. We must remember that however short the interval may be, this act is clearly composed of two moments or *tempos*, namely conjuring up and conjuring away. It is, we may assume, the difference between these two *tempos* that would correspond, at a higher level of rational thinking, to the difference of stratum between primary and secondary language.

I should like to emphasize that this must not be taken as a mere figure of speech. At the logical level of language, denying a statement *p* may be equated with asserting the falsehood of *p*. But in the pre-logical phases of thinking and speaking, there is much to suggest that negation, i. e. the denial of something previously posited, has an in greater or lesser degree magical implication. The point was very well brought out by H. Ammann, (*Die menschliche Rede* II. Teil, Nachwort) when he emphasized the existence of a specific symbolic-suggestive use of negation which is so frequent in ordinary speech. In sentences like 'Nur, der Mann wird (hoffentlich) nicht grade heute kommen', he detected (justly to my mind) 'a sort of magical warding off of something feared' (*eine Art von magischer Abwehr des Befürchteten*). 'This moment of warding off,' he says, 'belongs beyond any doubt to the most original and primitive function of negation; the command to stop doing something is most emphatically brought to expression by a loud "No!!"; a bad news is very often received by the terrified hearer with gestures and words implying defence, such as exclaiming "No, no!" and making the motion of stopping the ears.' It is important to note in this connection that many languages have gone a step further and developed an important class of negative words specifically designed to serve the magical purpose of warding off evils, as opposed to, and side by side with, 'ordinary' means of negation—the *apotropeic* negation, if we may call it so.

Now this phenomenon is exceedingly common in the Indo-European languages, the contrast between these two sorts of negation being represented already in Proto-I. E. by the pair \**mē* (prohibitive)—\**ne* (simple): Sanscrit, "mā" as opposed to "na" (e. g. "Ma no ghoreṇa caratābhi dhṛṣṇu" RV. x, 34. 'Bewitch us not forcibly with magic', "Mākir neṣan, mākim riṣan, mākim saṃ ṣāri kevaṇe" RV. vi, 54. Let no one be lost! Let it not be hurt! Let it not be crushed in a pit!'); Greek, "mē" as opposed to "ou" (e. g. "Mē dē nēas helōsi" II. xvi, 128, 'May they not seize the ship!') etc. But this is in no way limited to the Indo-

European family; indeed the phenomenon may very well be described as universal, since we meet with the same kind of distinction in many languages belonging to diverse linguistic families, as for example: Hebrew "al" in opposition to "lō", Sumerian "bara", "nam", "na", as opposed to "nu", Ancient Chinese "wu" as opposed to "pu", Burmese "ma...ne" as opposed to "ma...phu", Malay "djangan" as opposed to "tidak" etc., etc.

We have hitherto been chiefly concerned with words standing for outwardly observable—or imagined to be so observable—objects, qualities, and situations, whether posited or negated. There remains to be discussed another class of words standing for those occurrences which are observable only in an introspective way. Regarding this class of words, which is by no means less important than the preceding one, it must be noticed at once that here not merely connotata but also denotata themselves are mental, denoting as they do such 'inner' states, emotions or feelings, as love, hatred, jealousy and the like. As has been argued above, connotation is in any case more or less vague and indefinite, but at the same time it will have to be admitted that in such words as have been discussed so far, the denotata, being principally 'real' qualities, 'real' events, or 'real' relations, are sufficiently definite and fixed; they are at least solid enough to resist any attempt to change them in an arbitrary and wilful way. With words having 'inner' denotata, on the contrary, this is far from being the case, for in this class of words the very denotata are themselves of the vaguest possible sort. Not that these words lack denotata; there is, I think, no possible reason for denying the real existence of such mental states as represented by words like 'love', 'hatred', etc. The point is that these 'inner' denotata are by their very nature infinitely more elusive, subtle, and fugitive than 'outer' denotata; they lack sharp outlines; they have no precise colour; they are variable and unsteady, each having always an extensive borderland of uncertainty and freedom. Moreover, by far the greater number of mental states we experience are so blurred and indeterminate that they could never possibly be put into words. Even those which are customarily described by such words as 'love' and 'hatred', which, therefore, usually appear to us as pretty unambiguous, will, on a closer examination, turn out to be of a very puzzling status. Love and hatred are two entirely different attitudes of mind, to be sure; no one, it might seem, would confuse them; and yet, the two are not independent and distinguished from each other in the way a table is a table and not possibly a chair. This said, it will at once be understandable that here, if anywhere, is a suitable place for sophisticated verbal magicians to revel in their orgies.

Before we go further in our discussion, it will be well to pause a while and ponder two significant facts concerning word-to-object correlations: first, that ostensive definition is not in any way the sole means of acquiring vocabulary; that even among the words of common usage there are many that have been acquired

through word-word definition where the proper use of one word is taught and learned in terms of some other word or words. This, however, seems to imply that by simply manipulating or combining pre-existent connotata we can produce a new, independent connotatum having—or appearing to have—reference to a certain denotatum. Secondly, the fact that, as there is no natural (much less divine) correlation between the level of words and that of things, there is (theoretically at least) ample room for every individual to use any word he chooses in whatever way he chooses. In view of the essentially non-necessary character of linguistic symbols, there is certainly a respect in which Humpty Dumpty (in *Alice through the Looking-glass*) was fundamentally right when he insisted that words should mean what he chose that they should. The problem has been brilliantly discussed by Richard Robinson in the above-quoted book on *Definition* (Ch. IV) under the title of 'stipulative definition'. I have already referred to the erroneous nature of the ordinary person's assumption that there is some one definitely fixed correct meaning for each word, all other meanings having to be either reduced to it or condemned as improper and incorrect. The principle of free stipulation justly insists upon everybody's right to make any word mean anything he likes. Now as a matter of fact, this kind of entire freedom of semantic stipulation is hampered to a great extent in the case of words having outwardly observable things and events as their denotata, by the sensation of hardness they tend to give us, which, crystallized in the form of lexical or customary meaning, seems to resist strenuously to any attempt of violent departure from usage. Let us notice that this resisting power of customary meaning turns out to be much weaker in words standing for mental states, for in this case the customary meaning can hope to get very little support from the side of denotation; there is consequently much more room for free stipulation. But even here, and even when one has stipulated a new arbitrary meaning for a word with a considerable amount of success, it is still very rare to find the customary meaning cancelled completely and once for all by the new stipulation. For the dignity of customary meaning, having all the weight of tradition and popular sanction behind it, can never be made to waver so easily. Thus whenever one tries to control the existing order of word-meaning by an act of stipulation, there inevitably occurs a clash between the two competing powers. And this clash is liable of causing remarkable effects on our ways of thinking, especially when it occurs on purpose.

Let me, by way of illustration, cite a remarkable case, again from J.-P. Sartre. In *L'Être et le Néant* he gives a very characteristic description of 'love'. Love, to give here his conclusion only, is a despotic 'appropriation of the Other', 'the enslavement of the Other's liberty in so far as it is liberty, that is to say, his liberty in itself.' (*E. et N.* p. 442, 473). Now this Sartrian picture of 'love', as a despotic subjugation of the beloved person and the deprivation of his or her personal liberty, has justly raised storms of protest. Thus Benoit Pruche in his



*L'homme de Sartre* has criticized it as 'nothing more than an atrocious caricature, the most perfect negation of love that can be imagined.' Love carried on to this degree of contortion, he says, is no love at all, 'it is just frantic egoism, and has nothing but a verbal similitude with "love", and a very dubious one at that. It would be much better to pull off the mask and give the Sartrian love its true name: hatred' (p. 122). It would be much better indeed; at least much simpler, if everyone adhered strictly to the principle of always calling a dog a dog and a cat a cat even in the domain of emotions and feelings. But is it in fact possible? Captain Fellows in *The Power and Glory* believes that it is: 'It was his one firm conviction that he really felt the correct emotions of love and joy and grief and hate.' But this was perhaps nothing more than his personal, subjective conviction. Reference has earlier been made to the very woolly status of mental occurrences — and that already in the domain of denotation. The 'mental' denotata are far from constituting clearly delimited regions; there are so many overlappings, uncertain borderlands, transitional stages and strange mixtures. This is naturally much more the case with their connotata. There is no 'standard meaning' of love to mark it off from all other similar or related emotions. Many thinkers have taken advantage of this curious state of our mental terms, and Sartre no doubt is one of them.

Suppose Sartre really decided to obey Benoit Pruche and consented to calling everything by its customary name: what happens? The moment he substituted his '*amour*' by '*haine*', there would perhaps be nothing particularly interesting left out of his whole philosophizing about this aspect of human existence. For this philosophizing is based precisely on the essential ambiguity of words standing for mental states. The peculiar charm of his theory of love lies in the fact that the word 'love' is here endowed with a double connotation. He keeps the term 'love', and thereby retains the customary connotation of this term, but, at the same time, he surreptitiously introduces into it the usual connotation associated with the word 'hatred', mixes them up, and succeeds in bringing out a monster of love in the mind of the reader. Thus by means of inter-verbal definition, that is, by a clever handling of connotata, an ingenious philosopher may conjure up any monster he likes and make it parade as a real being before the eyes of the astounded laymen.

Non-empirical thinking is perhaps one of the most salient features of human intelligence. This is made possible to a very large extent by the capacity displayed by our words of being freely defined in an inter-verbal way. But this again, is made possible by the intervention of connotata between words and things-meant. Connotation, working as it does independently of the immediate environmental factors, makes our verbal-thinking largely autonomous. As H. H. Price has shown (*op. cit.* Ch. IV,) the characteristically human way of thinking and speaking is usually very little affected by what is actually going on in the physical environment.

In his terminology, verbal thinking is 'free', while mere sign-thinking as displayed by intelligent animals is 'tied'. This would amount to saying that language and reality—whatever the latter may prove to be—constitute two different planes, which, though interrelated with each other in the most intricate way, are in principle quite independent and autonomous. For the plane of language, in so far at least as pure connotation goes, is nothing but a world of conjured-up phantoms. And thus we can now begin to see why our words never vouch for the reality of their meanings. The world of connotation is a world where such inexistent things as 'dragons' 'unicorns' or 'phlogiston' can very well parade in exactly the same capacity as 'dogs' and 'tables'; but if this is possible it is simply because, in this world, even dogs and tables are after all mere conjured-up phantoms.



## Chapter VII

## THE EVOCATIVE POWER OF WORDS

Now we turn to the second of the constituents of connotative meaning as distinguished at the beginning of the foregoing chapter: the intuitive element. The primary function of the referential aspect of connotation with which we have been concerned at some length is, in short, to describe or picture reality — the term 'reality' here being taken in the broadest sense of the term. Of all the aspects of connotation this is undoubtedly the one which stands in the closest relation to the denotative phase of meaning. Connotation, however, has another aspect which also pictures reality, but in a way quite different from the referential description, and which, furthermore, must not be confused with the of feelings and emotions as it would be if we are to adopt the strictly *dual* theory of meaning functions as set forth by I. A. Richards in *Principles of Literary Criticism* (cf. Ch. XXXIV). Following Marshall Urban, who again follows K. Otto Erdmann in this matter, we may call it an intuitive (*anschaulich*) way of picturing the world. The position, as distinguished from that of the followers of the dual theory, might be briefly expressed by saying that all that is not referential in connotation is not necessarily emotive. There is, that is to say, a middle term between conceptual meaning and emotional evocation, which is, therefore, half referential and half evocative, if we may put it so. It is referential in that it does in some fashion refer to the extra-linguistic reality, the contextual situation in which the denotatum is experientially presented; it is evocative in that the way it presents to our mind the living reality is very similar to, and in fact often inextricably bound up with, emotional evocation.

The point is that language has an intrinsic expressiveness of a very peculiar sort: besides the well-known functions of directly referring to the 'things meant' and of arousing feelings and emotions, it has a certain power of making the 'things meant' real and alive once again at the level of linguistic expression. It is not exactly the power to evoke images, for imagery, though in actual fact it is very often a powerful help to intuition, is not in itself a necessary ingredient of the intrinsic expressiveness of which we are now speaking. It is rather a peculiar power of evoking something of the living reality, the very colour and flavour of the living concrete which surrounds the denotatum of a word. This intuitive character of language making us relive objects, situations and characters in their immediate concreteness, Marshall Urban has rightly called the *vis poetica* of words

(*Language and Reality*, Ch. X, III, A; Ch. IV, II, C). He holds that when a poet sings, for example, 'red blooms the rose' or 'wild blows the wind', those words place the hearer immediately in a living landscape where winds are blowing and flowers blooming; they conjure up, so to speak, a living reality. This power of conjuring up reality is in fact most conspicuously manifested in the poetic use of language. The most indispensable attribute of poetic language, as Philip Wheelwright says, is its radical particularity of reference, its presentative immediacy; 'it presents as well as represents' (*The Burning Fountain*, Ch. V.)

Now, viewed from the psychological standpoint, this may be simply one of the ordinary functions of imagination. And in fact Wheelwright has attributed this kind of *vis poetica* to what he has called 'confrontative imagination', which is said to act upon its object by particularizing and intensifying it. From a semantic point of view, however, it seems to be something more than that. For the power here spoken of to make things real and active in language belongs in a sense to the very semantic constitution of linguistic symbols. We may, if we like, look at the matter the other way round and say that there is a poet in very one of us and that this poet dwelling in each of us plays a very remarkable role in making the human way of handling symbols quite different from the sign-behaviour of animals. The poetic evocation of imaginative powers is an essential or intrinsic character of human language as such. To this, and only to this, extent were the German Romantic school and its Italian counterpart right in maintaining the fundamental identity of *Ursprache* and *Urpoesie*. In fact, all speech is, in a certain sense, poetry. For poetry it certainly is that makes up the internal difference between animal cries and linguistic symbols in rendering the latter bearers of infinitely subtle and complex meanings. On condition that we understand poetry and the poetic in the sense indicated above, we may safely assert that every name-word is invariably endowed with an intrinsic *vis poetica*, the manifestation of which, though usually remaining unnoticed in much everyday intercourse and coming to the fore only when keyed to the highest pitch in the so-called 'poetic' use of language, is in reality essential to the constitution of the connotative meaning as such. For without it words would lack what we may call the *sphere* of applicability.

When we approach the problem of the *Urpoesie* of linguistic symbols in a mood free from any romantic intoxication, we notice at once the important fact that every name-word has more or less limited, latent possibilities of association. It is indeed remarkable that, when a word is uttered, in the absence or in the presence of the denotatum, all these latent possibilities of association immediately get into the state of activatedness; they are, in other words, at once brought to mind, some *in actu* some *in potentia*. It is this tendency of the word of activating a certain number of associative possibilities in our minds that determines and delimits the sphere of its primary applicability; the utterance of a word tends to delimit, we might say, a certain space in the real or imaginary world of being

of which the denotatum forms part. The very vivid sense of reality, of 'the radical particularity of reference', of 'very quality, tone and flavour of the concrete qua concrete' (Wheelwright), which is considered, as we saw earlier, the most essential characteristic of poetic language, is but the effect of an artistic intensification of this fundamental and necessary function of language of evoking the extra-verbal situation linked associatively with the denotatum of a given word.

Karl Bühler (*Sprachtheorie* III, § 11) has called this function the *Stoff*, or the 'material' aspect, of word-meaning, and insisted on the importance of recognizing the 'material steering' *Stoffliche Steuerung* in any operation with verbal symbols. 'The mere occurrence, so he tells us, of the word "radish" is enough to bring at once the reader to the dining-table or into the garden; that is to say, into a certain "sphere" quite different from that to which the word "ocean", for example, would take him.' It is quite true that a general word can have no definite meaning except in what Ogden and Richards have described as the context of situation. But it is also important to note, on the other hand, that a single word, even when taken out of its vital situational context and thus deprived of all linguistic as well as extralinguistic supports, has still something of the 'flavour' of its own sphere, retains something of the situational. Given, for instance, a set of separate words taken at random and without any context: 'ocean', 'tree', 'sing', 'table', 'ship', 'bird', 'read', 'flower', 'wave', 'book'; it would not be difficult for the ordinary person to recognize in this medley of words the existence of three diverse spheres each with its own point of crystallization attracting around it almost irresistibly a certain number of words, and producing thus a natural order out of the given disorder; namely, (1) ocean—wave—ship, (2) tree—flower—bird—sing, (3) table—read—book. It is some such situational sphere which properly belongs to every one of the name-words, or rather, to which it properly belongs, that predetermines the limits of its applicability and thereby also the range of its possible inter-verbal associations. Between the noun 'sparrow' and the verb 'chirp', for example, there is as it were a natural tie, belonging as they do to the same sphere of application. Between, say, 'table' and 'chirp', contrariwise, we see no such relationship. When we hear someone say, 'there blows....', we need not ask him 'What is it that you say is blowing?', for the verb evokes by its own virtue the connotation of the noun 'wind'. Verbs like 'blow', 'flow', 'chirp', etc., carry on their fronts, so to speak, the definite marks of their 'subjects'. And in general, the utterance of a name-word tends to arouse at once in the hearer a state of preparedness or expectation for a certain number of other name-words. This phenomenon of inter-verbal semantic evocation has been well brought out by Ernst Leisi in *Der Wortinhalt* (Heidelberg, 1953), who has called it the 'semantic concord' (*semantische Kongruenz*) of words on the analogy of the well-known phenomenon of grammatical concord.

Thus we see that the *Urpoesie* residing in every name-word, works in a very

peculiar manner in two divergent but closely related ways: extraverbally and intra-verbally. Extra-verbally it evokes a living reality; it makes us *re-experience* things, qualities, events and situations as they have been lived through in the primary experience. Intra-verbally it evokes the (often very complex) net of connotations formed by a set of words, belonging more or less loosely to the same 'material' sphere. In either way, be it noted again, the *Urpoesie* is evocation. The fact comes to clearest consciousness when we examine the phenomenon of metaphor which plays beyond any doubt the most significant role in the constitution and development of human language. To put it crudely, metaphor is a sort of double evocation. It arises whenever a name-word is transposed from its proper domain to some other sphere of being on the strength of some likeness perceived or felt between two things from different fields of experience; as, for example, when we call a man 'a fox' — transfer of the noun from the *animal* sphere to which it properly belongs to a completely different *human* sphere — or when the verb 'bloom' is carried over from the flower to the woman, or again when we speak of a 'sweet melody', transferring a word which belongs primarily to the sphere of gustatory sensation to that of auricular sensation.

In trying to elucidate the nature of metaphor with special regard to its evocative power, it would perhaps be a wise policy to follow Ernst Leisi (op. cit. III, C. 4) in dividing it into two principal kinds: viz. direct metaphor and indirect metaphor, though the adjectives 'direct' and 'indirect' do not seem to be very happily chosen ones, or may perhaps be even positively misleading as we shall presently see. As an example of the former class Leisi gives *Die Steine reden*, and of the latter *Die Steine schweigen*. It would at once leap to the eye that the realm of 'direct' metaphors can properly be no other than the world of sheer myth and fantasy. Direct metaphor is a product of imagination; it is purely subjective; one just feels as if stones were talking; it is based on no real likeness or similitude perceived, metaphor *sine fundamento in re* as we might say. Baudelaire, in his celebrated *Invitation au Voyage*, depicted a miraculous *Chambre* where all its old and familiar pieces of furniture talk to the enchanted soul of the poet in its *douce langue natale*. In fairy-tales we often meet with tables and chairs talking among themselves. But these and the like are all experiences springing from the source of the imaginative faculty of human mind. It is essential to recognize that, when we say 'Tables and chairs are talking,' the transfer of the verb 'talk' from a human context to an inanimate sort of context, has no other ground than that we have formed, in an entirely subjective or arbitrary way, a fantastic mental picture of pieces of furniture talking secretly with each other as if they were human beings. The transfer is not based on any sort of real likeness, that is, a likeness really characteristic of the things compared, for evidently tables and chairs are not in the state of producing, except of course in fables and fairy-tales, anything that may be properly compared to human voice. The magical import of direct

metaphor is too obvious to be worth pointing out. The mechanism of this kind of metaphor is through and through evocation; it bears witness in the most striking way to the great power of words of 'conjuring up' phantoms and illusions. Little wonder, therefore, that it has always played, and is still playing, a tremendous role in the formation of the *Weitanschauung* of primitive man, peopling his world with a host of spirits and ghosts to whom all sorts of fantastic acts are attributed. It needs no special stressing, however, that, from the standpoint of the present chapter which aims at analysing the more fundamental structure of word-meaning, the direct metaphor, in comparison with the 'indirect' one, is clearly derivative and of only secondary importance.

The indirect metaphor, exemplified above by the sentence 'the stones are dumb,' is of supreme importance for our present purpose in that its working has penetrated into the very tissue of the semantic constitution of most of our words and has become thereby ingrained into our common habits of expression. While the direct metaphor is, as we have just seen, a mere product of our imagination, in the indirect kind of metaphor the transfer of a word is based on the intuition of some real likeness of relations. It is, so to speak, metaphor *cum fundamento in re*. If we call a sly and cunning man a fox, it is simply because we have perceived something about the man reminding us of the characteristic slyness of the fox. If we call a meadow covered with flowers a 'smiling meadow' it is because we have perceived some sort of likeness between the joyous view of the beautiful meadow and the look of a human face brimming with smile. The objective fact expressed by the sentence 'the stones are dumb,' that is, the natural muteness of stones, is neither purely imaginary nor false to reality, because stones are in fact voiceless. In contrast to such a sentence as 'the stones are talking among themselves' which is sheer fantasy and has nothing at all to do with truth-value, the sentence before us is based on empirical facts, from which, moreover, it derives its truth-value. Only the rule of 'semantic concord' is ignored. As Leisi points out, the word 'stone' classifies the thing for which it stands as something belonging to the sphere of speechless things, while the adjective 'dumb'—or the German verb 'schweigen'—classifies the thing as something essentially endowed with speech; only those things that are capable of speaking under normal conditions, can properly be said to be 'dumb' when not in the state of exercising that function. So there is here a semantic incongruity between the subject and the predicate. It is the combination of these two points, viz. the presence of some real basis for comparison and the absence of semantic concord, which brings indirect metaphor to being.

As one would expect, this kind of metaphor in the capacity of one of the fundamental modes of Analogy has been since the Middle Ages subjected to repeated discussions among philosophers and theologians of the Thomist tradition in their treatment of the celebrated concept of *analogia entis*. Thus James F. Anderson,

a representative modern exponent of the theory, devotes a whole chapter of his book *The Bond of Being* to the elucidation of meaning of the metaphor. The scholastic way of approach is completely different from the method of linguistic analysis; being essentially part of metaphysics it is, viewed from the semanticists' standpoint, undoubtedly too one-sided, but we must at the same time remember that the ontological treatment peculiar to the scholastics does give some remarkable sidelights on how metaphor works. The scholastics begin by distinguishing three principal modes of Analogy: (1) analogy of attribution, (2) analogy of metaphor, and (3) analogy of proper proportionality. Analogy of attribution or of simple proportion, as it is sometimes called, is, in brief, the case of comparing many things to one and the same things, as when we apply the term 'healthy' or 'healthful' to such diverse things as man, medicine, complexion, and diet, in virtue of the (diverse) relations they bear to one and the same concept, namely the health of the animal. Medicine is called 'healthful' because it restores health; complexion is called 'healthy' because it is a sign of health. In each case the relation introduced is obviously different, but the 'thing' to which these diverse relations are referred is identically the same, the health of the animal. (cf. Anderson, *The Bond of Being* Ch. VIII)

Analogy of metaphor, we are told, is something midway between this and the third kind of analogy, that of 'being', which is claimed to be the only type deserving to be called analogical in the strict and proper sense of the word. This last claim concerning the truly and properly analogical nature of 'being' need not be examined here. Now analogy of metaphor, we are told, resembles that of attribution in that it, too, is operative only in the order of univocal concepts, that is, operates with a concept which is in itself not analogical at all, but univocal. In neither type of analogy do we find one common concept which is intrinsically analogical; in both analogies the character signified by the name is said to be *formally* present in only one analogate and merely denominatively or improperly in the other analogate. When we call a cunning person a fox, the term 'fox' is evidently univocal in itself and neither directly nor indirectly signify the character of man; the term is here 'merely given an analogical reference by the mind.'

On the other hand, analogy of metaphor is said to differ from analogy of attribution and greatly approximates to the third kind of analogy in that it is based on some *real* likeness and has an internal constitution of proportionality, though an improper and imperfect one. Unlike attribution, which, as we have just seen, merely affirms the existence of some extrinsic relation, metaphor is based on the intuition of a similitude *really* characteristic of the thing to which the term is metaphorically applied. In Anderson's words, 'while there is no health in climate, there is "something leonine" in Achilles.' Furthermore, it is particularly emphasized by the scholastics that this *real* likeness on which metaphor is based is in the order of efficient causality and is, therefore, essentially *dynamic*

in nature. The likeness, in other words, affirmed by metaphor is in the order of effects produced; instead of reaching down directly to the very essence of the thing, it reveals its mode of action and operation. When a man is called a fox, the metaphor is simply an abridgment of the analogy: the actions done by the man affects our mind or impresses us in the same way as the actions of a real fox would. And in this sense metaphor is considered more intrinsic than simple attribution and is said to strike deeper, because operation is clearly 'closer to essence' than extrinsic relation (cf. Anderson, *op. cit.* ch. XIV).

It is perhaps out of place here to attempt to criticize from our point of view the mode of thinking peculiar to the scholastic ontology, nor does it seem necessary to pursue any longer the Thomist theory of metaphorical analogy. The point of specific relevance for our present purpose lies in the fact that a theory approaching our problem from an entirely different angle from that of the linguist has likewise come to recognize the existence of the original intuition of a *real* likeness underlying the constitution and use of metaphor, and that, moreover, it has laid a special stress on the *dynamic* nature of metaphorical analogy—a point which has been ignored by the professional students of linguistic meaning. The recognition that metaphor belongs properly to the order of action and operation is, I think, essential to an adequate phenomenological analysis of the metaphorical evocation. For it is, presumably, this very dynamic character of metaphor that makes it so powerful and evocative. If, as has been pointed out earlier, every name-word as such carries in itself a vital, intuitive meaning, and is by itself capable of conjuring up reality in all its original freshness and force, it is precisely at the point of metaphorical transfer that the intuitive content of a word is brought most clearly to light. Put into the peculiar atmosphere of dynamic activity, the word, so to speak, begins to glow, and all the lived meaning accumulated in the word is evoked and comes all at once to the surface.

It would be quite at point here to recall the most fundamental fact about language, which is indeed almost a truism in these days, that most of our talking and thinking is carried on in metaphors. Metaphor is not a simple figure of speech, a poetic ornament stuck on to our language to make it beautiful. Our ordinary vocabulary is full of metaphors, ranging from those that are already dead, i. e. that are no more felt as such, through intermediate stages of half-faded ones up to those that are vivid, active and expressive. Metaphor, as a peculiar kind of transference of meaning from a sphere to another, is at the root of natural speech construction; it is as it were the very tissue of linguistic meaning, it *is* language. This said, the final conclusion to be drawn seems to lie close at hand. For here again we are obviously driven to face the same old fact that language is through and through evocation.

Now we may turn to the emotive constituent of connotation. Theoretically we

can and certainly must draw a fairly rigorous distinction between emotive and intuitive meaning, but in actual fact the intuitive and the emotive tend to present themselves almost inextricably bound up together. So much so that many able scholars have altogether overlooked the distinction. Whenever, in effect, the intuitive character of a word manifests itself more or less conspicuously, there inevitably occurs simultaneous evocation of feeling and emotion. This is nothing but a very simple fact which should occasion neither surprise nor perplexity. For, as I have said above, the very expressiveness of intuitive meaning consists in conjuring up a living reality external to the mind, in making us live or relive the real world of experience (of whatever dimension it may be) in its original freshness, vigour and vividness. The sense of reality thus evoked can rarely remain inactive and uninfluential on the affective faculties of our minds; to the extent, namely, that the act of intuitive evocation succeeds, and according to the more or less 'exciting' nature of the living context thus conjured up, feelings and emotions are very likely to be raised in our minds, though of course in enormously varying degrees of intensity. It will be obvious, then, that they do not represent two isolated processes. Speaking in a more general way we might even say that the emotive function of words is largely a consequence of their descriptive function, the word 'descriptive' here being taken in a broad sense containing both reference and intuition. There is, I think, no question that, in so far, at least, as most of our familiar everyday words are concerned, a great part of their emotive meaning comes from their descriptive significatoin. But if, as a matter of fact, the development of attitudes and emotions ensuing some arrangement of words is in most cases vitally dependent upon the descriptive meanings of the words used, yet it manifestly will not do, on this account, to deny the necessity of discriminating—theoretically as well as in practice—between the two sorts of meaning. For in the case of emotive meaning, the primary emphasis is clearly put not on the 'reality' or the objects referred to, but rather on the effects in emotion and attitude produced by such evocation of the reality. That makes a world of difference.

The emotive meaning as an independent function of the linguistic sign is not in fact a discovery of recent date. At as early a date as the earlier eighteenth century, Berkeley wrote in the famous *Introduction* to his *Principles of Human Knowledge* (Section 20) the following very remarkable words: 'Besides, the communicating of ideas marked by words is not the chief and only end of language, as is commonly supposed. There are other ends, as the raising of some passion, the exciting to or deterring from an action, the putting the mind in some particular dispositoin; to which the former is in many cases barely subservient, and sometimes entirely omitted, when these can be obtained without it, as I think doth not unfrequently happen in the familiar use of language. I entreat the reader to reflect with himself, and see if it doth not often happen, either in hearing



or reading a discourse, that the passions of fear, love, hatred, admiration, and disdain, and the like, arise immediately in his mind upon the perception of certain words, without any ideas coming between. At first, indeed, the words might have occasioned ideas that were fitting to produce those emotions; but, if I mistake not, it will be found that, when language is once grown familiar, the hearing of the sounds or sight of the characters is oft immediately attended with those passions which at first were wont to be produced by the intervention of ideas that are now quite omitted. May we not, for example, be affected with the promise of a *good thing*, though we have not an idea of what it is?

It is indeed remarkable that in this paragraph the gist of the so-called emotive use of language is most clearly grasped and given a perfectly concise formulation. Here we see Berkeley, as was his wont, attempting to make his theory as phenomenologically true as possible to the actual processes of speech experience, and in fact he succeeds in describing with a considerable amount of truthfulness the psychological genesis of *purely* emotive language through the gradual weakening of the referential meanings involved. The tenor of his discussion is surprisingly modern. References may indeed well be involved, he argues (rightly to my mind), as previous stages in the raising of emotions and passions, but they are not what really matters, and may finally become quite insignificant and almost useless. There are certainly innumerable occasions when we use words merely to evoke attitudes, and when, moreover, the attitudes and emotions aimed at are evoked without any reference being required to come in. He does not even forget to add that the effects produced by such emotive use of words may and very often do work in a way extraordinarily damaging to the mind. In a tone of biting irony he tries to convince the reader of the fact making use of the famous example of *Aristoteles dixit*. 'For example,' he says, when a schoolman tells me "Aristotle hath said it," all I conceive he means by it is to dispose me to embrace his opinion with the deference and submission which custom has annexed to that name. And this effect may be so instantly produced in the minds of those who are accustomed to resign their judgment to authority of that philosopher, as it is impossible any idea either of his person, writings, or reputation should go before.' This will be enough to make Berkeley a real predecessor of the general semanticists of our time. For the method here described of distorting the hearer's view by calling up strong emotions is essentially the same as that which characterizes modern sales talk and political propaganda. Unfortunately, however, he did not feel the need of enlarging any more upon the theme of the emotive power of words, a theme which was to become later a matter of such insistent importance. The section I have just quoted was originally inserted in the *Introduction* as a piece of mere incidental observation, for the chief object he had in mind in writing the whole passage was to show the erroneous nature of the doctrine of abstract ideas. Quite abruptly, he cut short his own discussion by saying, 'But why should I insist on

those things which every one's experience will, I doubt not, plentifully suggest unto him?' In order, however, to grasp the real meaning of those—in themselves quite commonplace—things suggested by every one's day-to-day experience, and to become clearly conscious of the serious consequences of mistaking an emotive appeal for a piece of factual information, man had to wait two centuries. Today, thanks to the assiduous efforts of semanticists, the problem of the emotional thinking and emotional speaking has come to the forefront of current attention; it is even a very popular subject in both lay and academic circles. Living in an age of the unprecedented expansion of publicity and propaganda with incredibly manifold means of influencing public opinion, we cannot but become *bon gré mal gré* extremely conscious of the dangers resulting from the abuse of emotionally charged words. It was both natural and timely, therefore, that the general semanticists emphasized the most urgent need of guarding against the 'magical' effects of emotive language.

What is generally known as emotive language has two clearly distinguishable but closely related aspects—expression and influence—according as it concerns the speech habits of the speaker or those of the hearer. Current semantic discussions are largely unanimous in recognizing this distinction; hence the most usual definition of emotive terms as those words which are especially suitable for expressing the speaker's feelings and emotions and for stirring those of the hearer. Viewed primarily from the speaker's standpoint, they are no more than natural, i. e. behaviouristic, symptoms of his subjective states; they are active expressions giving direct vent to the emotions and feelings that have somehow arisen in the mind. In this sense, emotive terms are, as L. Stevenson has pointed out (*Ethics and Language* III, 1–2), akin not to words denoting emotions, but rather to such natural and direct manifestations of the emotions as laughs, groans, shrieks, sighs and the like. The expressive aspect of the emotive terms, important as it is, is in itself largely irrelevant to the topic of the present chapter, and does not therefore require more than passing attention. The problem of emotive words begins to assume an enormous importance for our purpose when we turn to the other side of the matter, and look at the phenomenon of emotive language mainly from the view-point of the emotional or practical effects obtainable by the use of such language.

Now it is a matter of common experience that any expression of strong emotions on the part of the speaker tends to have immediate repercussions on the psychological state of the hearer. When a speaker expresses some of his feelings under appropriate circumstances by means of a set of well-selected strategic words he has every reason to expect that his words will set his feeling at work on the hearer's mind, spurring him perhaps on to some action or attitude. This, it goes without saying, may very naturally and easily be developed further into conscious methods of deceiving others, and, worse still, even into unconscious methods of self-deception. This phase of the problem has been so much dealt with in recent



times by semanticists that further detailed discussion would only be a tedious repetition. But before leaving the present discussion altogether, some passing remarks may perhaps not be amiss concerning a point which might otherwise be misunderstood.

During the past two decades various writers and scholars have repeatedly emphasized the 'magical' nature of emotive language. Indeed, of all the fundamental elements of connotative meaning, none seems more entitled to the appellation of 'magical' than the emotive aspect; and nothing, perhaps, reveals in so glaring a light the deeply magical constitution of human language. Those of us who, in national and international political thinking, in the discussion of some controversial questions in warfare, morals and religion, cannot help feeling an irresistible impulse towards resorting to emotionally toned words, causing thereby a host of irrelevancies and confusing thus all issues beforehand, cannot be in any way said to have completely outgrown the primitive magical mentality. Even in modern cultured circumstances, emotive speakers are, in short, still at bottom speaking magicians. But the most vital question to be raised in this connection is this: Shall we ever cease to talk emotively? Can we really look forward to a time when an impartial and objective investigation of facts will be made possible in any discussion of debatable questions by our remaining cold enough, intelligent enough to keep our thinking and speaking purged of all irrelevant emotions? This is very unlikely to come about. The fact is that we are so enslaved by emotional phraseology that it is practically impossible for us to discuss a controversial matter using only those words which would coldly indicate objective facts.

It is essential to recall at this point the important fact already referred to that the so-called 'emotive terms' do not represent a specific class of words that are by nature *emotive*, i. e. neither more nor less than emotive. Strictly speaking there are no specifically *emotive* terms. Or we might approach the matter the other way round and say that all words are essentially emotive. As I. A. Richards once wrote, there can be no doubt that originally all language was emotive, and most language is still emotive. This simply means that every one of the words we use in thinking and speaking bears the unmistakable stamp of its emotional history. It is not merely those acceptedly 'emotive' terms (such as 'nigger' as against 'negro'; 'jingo' as against 'nationalist') or ethical terms and value words (such as 'good', 'bad', 'beautiful' etc.) that are charged with emotional power. All words, even those that are commonly regarded as 'unemotional', or 'emotionally neutral', are strictly speaking more or less emotive. The so-called emotionally neutral terms are nothing other than a large group of words in which the original power of emotional suggestion has been weakened and reduced to a wholly negligible degree. Words like 'automobile', 'house', 'percentage' and the like are as a matter of fact used mainly for descriptive purposes, and *are* almost purely descriptive; yet there still exist in them emotive potentialities, and they

may be actually so used, whenever there is such need, as to call out emotions in the hearer, and, when aided by strong attendant circumstances, may well serve the purpose of distorting his view of the truth. It has been said that even *logical* terms can be made to work in an emotive way. A slight change in the tone of voice may, as very often happens, ignite the explosive power of emotion and change in a moment the most innocent looking words into highly dangerous weapons. The bearing of this last point on the present work is so extremely intimate that it will be considered in more detail in Chap. XI, when we shall have to deal with the problem of the magical 'framing' of language.

## Chapter VIII

## THE STRUCTURAL EVOCATION

In the present chapter I propose to consider the last of the constituents of connotation as distinguished above: the structural. To free the following account from all misunderstandings, it seems necessary to give preliminary emphasis to a point of terminology. That is, before we can successfully proceed to detailed discussion, we must by all means come to an agreement as to what is to be understood by the term 'structure'.

In the celebrated Rectorial Address at St. Andrews, J. S. Mill declared *grammar* to be the most elementary part of logic. 'It is', he urged, 'the beginning of the analysis of the thinking process. The principles and rules of grammar are the means by which the forms of language are made to correspond with the universal forms of thought. The distinctions between the various parts of speech, between the cases of nouns, the moods and tenses of verbs, the functions of particles, are distinctions in thought, not merely in words.' The tenor of the passage may be reduced to a seemingly very simple dictum: the forms of language correspond with the forms of thought. Now the argument, put in these terms, must, I think, be recognized as largely true, in the sense namely, that it describes the fundamental fact that the forms of language, or linguistic patterns, are not, as they should be (according to modern logicians), simply the forms in which we put our words together, but are, to a very considerable degree, the forms in which we exercise in actual practice our thinking function. The irredeemable vice of Mill's argument comes from his mistaken and misleading assumption about the forms of grammar that they (especially those of the classical languages, whose 'incomparable superiority over every modern language, and over all languages, dead or living' he firmly believed) do represent the necessary and universal forms of human thought. The error of imagining as *necessary* and *universal* the forms of words and the rules of syntax of any language, be it ever of so regular and complicated a structure as Greek or Latin, has been in recent times so much and so repeatedly insisted upon that it need not receive more than passing attention. Students of linguistics have in recent years become ever more conscious that all forms of language are after all but accidental. The time is long past when we can hope to establish the much-desired 'universal grammar' on the basis of natural language.

It will be illuminating to consider for a little the vehement objection brought against Mill's view by I. A. Richards (in *Interpretation in Teaching*, Chap. Seven-

teen, Grammar and Logic). He takes up Mill's sentence 'the structure of every sentence is a lesson in logic' and rightly remarks that this kind of miscegenation between language and thought has engendered *bastard* logics. He warns us against dealing with ordinary language as though all necessary preparatory work on the structure of thought had already been done. But with this we are all so familiar by now. To-day any competently trained linguist does not ignore the fact that scientific logic and natural language are constantly and perhaps irreconcilably at loggerheads. Many first-rate logicians and semanticists think that what makes traditional Aristotelian logic largely, if not hopelessly, inadequate for modern scientific purposes is that it exploits too much and in too uncritical a way the natural tendencies and habits of language, naively transforming grammatical forms into metaphysical entities. The main contention of Richards must be sought elsewhere. The point he wants to make in particular is that syntax classifies the patterns in which we put our words together, not the forms in which we think. It will be remarked, however, that to use the key term 'form' in this way is also highly misleading. In Richards' terminology, 'I see a tiger' and 'I kick a tiger' are syntactically the same, while the *forms* of thought are extremely different. Contrariwise, 'Socrates is wise' and 'Wisdom belongs to Socrates' are two different word patterns, but the same *form* of thought underlies them both. What does this mean?

It is certainly erroneous to identify grammar with logic when the two are admittedly so ill adapted to each other; it would be no less erroneous, however, to suppose that there is no organic connection between them, or to leave out of account in attempting a theory of thinking the syntactic peculiarities of a given language as so many 'schemata', forms or ways of determining linguistically the contents of thought. Fr. Mauthner once wrote: If Aristotle had been a speaker of Chinese or some of the American Indian languages the formal logic would have become an entirely different thing, based on a wholly different classification of the categories. Without going so far, we might safely assume that the grammatical and syntactic structure of our mother-tongue is to a very great extent responsible for why we think as we actually do. The logic of our thinking, in other terms, is largely dependent on the accidental articulations of reality and the modes of their relationship as developed by and embedded in our native language. Not only the way we think but the objective reality around us, the way we build up the so-called 'real-world', seems to be very much dependent upon the patterns of language. As Korzybski put it, every language has at its bottom certain metaphysics, which is projected automatically into the surrounding world of reality. We cut 'reality' up along lines laid down by our language and tend to suppose that the resulting segments are the natural, i.e. objective, articulations of the world; we tend to forget thereby the most fundamental fact about our world experience, namely that 'we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do be-

cause the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation' (Ed. Sapir, *The Status of Linguistics as a Science* Sel. Wr. p. 162), that what we usually call the 'real world' is, partly at least, a very complex and complicated product of our language patterns.

In the light of these considerations it would seem wise not to use the phrase 'the forms of thought' ambiguously, as a synonymous expression for 'thought contents' or 'things referred to', but distinguish sharply between the two, while recognizing, on the other hand, the most intimate and essential nexus that binds them up with each other as inseparable correlates. Thus instead of saying, as Richards does, that 'I see a tiger' and 'I kick a tiger' represent two different *forms* of thought (though syntactically they are the same), we might rather say that they are formally or structurally, the same, although the constitution of the extra-linguistic fact referred to in each case is radically different. In other words, the emphasis should, I think, be laid definitely on the contrast between what Korzybski has called 'the structural assumptions' underlying natural language which behave both as patterns of speech and patterns of thought on the one hand, and the structural characteristics of the extra-linguistic reality on the other. Modern thinkers on linguistic problems are coming more and more to emphasize the importance of realizing the tremendous power the pure 'schemata' of language have on the behavioural and semantic reactions of human beings. The classificatory suggestiveness of word-forms and syntactic patterns of a language seems to create for the speakers of that language a special sort of *meaning*, which has its own rules and ways working over and above those of the lexical meanings of the separate words. This we may call 'structural' meaning. It will be easy to see that here we meet with another confirmation of our main thesis, namely that linguistic meaning is essentially and fundamentally based on mental evocation. It is indeed remarkable to see how the kind of structural evocation here spoken of governs — or does enslave, one might almost say — the mechanism of the human mind in astonishingly diverse ways; it is this, for example, that produces what is often described by general semanticists as prescientific, primitive metaphysics which is said to predispose certain fundamental features of the world-view of a people; it is this, again, that seems to determine to a very large extent the traditional habits of thought, forcing us to think in a narrowly limited number of ways which happen to be natural to our mother-tongue. (See for example the masterly discussion by Edward Sapir of the category of number and its influence on our mode of thinking, *Culture and Personality*, Sel. Wr. p. 550 ff.)

The existence of some such thing as 'structural meaning' underlying the lexical content of a sentence and operating so to speak as the thread of Ariadne for the understanding of the latter, has recently been brought out clearly by C. C. Fries in his new kind of grammar book *The Structure of English*. What he understands by structural meaning he illustrates by such ingeniously devised Jabberwocky

sentences devoid of all lexical meaning as 'Woggles ugged diggles,' 'A woggle ugged a diggle,' etc. The utterance 'Woggles ugged diggles' is composed of nonsense words, so of course we do not know what it means. Assuming, however, that this is English, he says, we at once become conscious of an important sort of meaning it does present to our minds. The sentence is meaningful in the sense that the sequence of nonsense words itself gives us a certain number of informations about some extra-verbal situation, which are not in any way insignificant: it makes us know, for instance, that *woggle* is a 'thing', that there is in this case more than one of these things, and that they *ugged*, i. e. performed in the past some kind of action, and that the action had some influence on some other 'things' called *diggles*. Fries has defined 'grammar' as a system of the devices that call forth such structural meanings; he has applied this kind of thinking in an uncompromising and thoroughgoing way to a formal analysis of the actual living speech of American people.

We must remember, however, that the recognition of this phenomenon itself is not at all a novelty in the history of linguistic science. Thus as early a writer as Anton Marty based his celebrated theory of inner speech (*innere Sprachform*), at least in part, on the basal intuition of what we may rightly call structural meaning. And in 1907, Karl Bühler, from a set of psychological experiments on verbalized thinking carried out independently of any existent linguistic theory, came to discover what he called 'syntactic schemata' (*syntaktische Schemata*) that were said to be wholly or partly 'vacant' (*leer*). 'When we wish to express some difficult thought,' he argued, 'we choose first an appropriate sentence-form for it; we begin by becoming conscious of the operational plan, and it is this plan which governs in the first place the words used. When we have seen through a complicated sentence, that means that we have gained a knowledge of its grammatical structure, that we have grasped the relations which obtain between the individual parts of the whole structure. ... These and other cases bring out something into full relief which, without being particularly noticeable, always — or almost always — comes in and mediates between thoughts and words, ... something which operates as the direct expression of the grammatical rules living in our own minds.' *Tatsachen und Probleme zu einer Psychologie der Denkvorgänge* quoted by himself in *Sprachtheorie* III, § 16).

Viewed from such a standpoint it will be found that the so-called parts of speech are, on the whole, real distinctions among words based upon real facts of structural meaning, and are therefore not to be rejected as wholly arbitrary and unserviceable as some scholars seem to believe. Structural considerations may easily go too far, as when, for example, some grammarians of the new school (including C. C. Fries himself) have tried to discard altogether the old-accepted grammatical categories, such as noun, adjective, verb and so forth, on the ground that the explanations of them that are usually given in conventional school grammars are

surprisingly inconsistent and insufficient. It can never reasonably be doubted today that the commonly accepted explanations or 'definitions' of the parts of speech are really in need of serious revision and, in not a few cases even of complete rejection. But this should not be taken as implying that the very notion of the so-called parts of speech is completely at fault. On the contrary, the practice of grammarians as regards the distinctions of word-class has, to my mind, generally been sound and well-grounded. The introduction of a structural view-point will certainly ameliorate the traditional definitions of these grammatical categories. And in fact this has already been attempted by some writers on language.

The main reason why the traditional theory seems so unacceptable to us lies obviously in the fact that it overlooks the tremendous formative power exerted by the felt inner speech-form, which is no other than the power of structural evocation inherent in the very make-up of the meaning of any word. It is indeed stupefying to find that no less an authority than Antoine Meillet could define the noun as an indicator of 'thing' (whether concrete objects or abstract ideas, real things or universals, like *Pierre, table, verdure, bonté, cheval*), and the verb as an indicator of 'events' or processes' (actions, states, or transitions from one state to another, like *il marche, il dort, il brille, il bleuit*) (*Linguistique historique et linguistique générale*, t. I, p. 175). This mode of formulation is undoubtedly inadequate. The inadequacy comes chiefly from the confusion of structural distinctions with real, i. e. objective, distinctions; it comes, in other words, from the fact that the linguistic structures which are called parts of speech are taken here as if they corresponded directly to the structure of the extra-verbal objective world. True, in this point as well as in many others, linguistic and real distinctions cover each other to a certain extent, but they are not on that account to be identified or confused. As Henry Sweet pointed out long ago, substance-words are most naturally nouns, attribute-words adjectives, and phenomenon-words, verbs, but the converse is not always the case: *tree* is a substance-word and also a noun; *flight* is a noun, but it is not a substance-word, it is a phenomenon-word. (cf. *History of Language*, Chap. IV).

It is of utmost importance to remember at this juncture that our natural language is properly made to represent the world as we experience it at the macroscopic level. Now the world seen at this 'normal' level is composed of grossly identified 'things' or 'objects', these 'things' having 'qualities' or 'attributes' inherent therein more or less permanently, acting in diverse ways and constituting 'phenomena' or changing attributes. These three elements of the macroscopic universe are represented in language by what we may call after Sweet 'substance-words', 'attribute-words', and 'phenomenon-words', respectively. Substance-words are the names of the objects of sense, such as men, animals, plants, pieces of furniture and the like. There is a good psychological reason grounded in the very make-up of our world-experience why the living creatures and material

objects tend to obtrude themselves as permanent, insistent 'things' solid enough to be bearers of various attributes, i. e. as *substantiae*. Their names are natural nouns; they are predestined to become the subjects of predication. In the same way the names of the attributes discerned in these substances and believed (rightly or wrongly) to be more or less permanent, constitute natural adjectives; and the more transitory and fugitive aspects of these objects of sense, that is to say, actions, processes, and events, that are believed to take place in or through them are represented by natural verbs which are phenomenon-words. It will be easy to see that substance-words, attribute-words, and phenomenon-words everywhere tend to develop most naturally into nouns, adjectives and verbs respectively. Theoretically, however, the two sets of categories must be kept strictly apart. The fundamental difference between the two lies in this point: in the latter set we meet already with what I have described above as structural evocation working definitely as a formative principle, as, that is to say, a manifestation of the *geistige Gestaltungskraft* of language, whose importance L. Weisgerber as a disciple of Humboldt has recently so much emphasized in his works.

The grammatical category of 'noun' may very well have originated in substance-words. And it is, needless to say, of the very nature of all substance-words to reflect rather passively and, as it were, docilely the real objects of sense which obtrude themselves as specifically substantival. Once raised to the status of 'nouns', however, they are no more passive mirrors of the world as apprehended by sense-perception; in other words, nouns, when grammatically effective, are more than mere names of things. The noun as a grammatical category once established, it begins to work in its own specific way regardless of how the real, i. e. extra-verbal, universe is structured, and the active structural force it exercises does even positively produce innumerable 'objects' and 'things' having no counterparts in the outer world. Thus it becomes possible to make any qualities, actions, and events behave *linguistically* on exactly the same footing as real things; hence the most natural emergence of abstracts and verbal nouns; hence, again, the birth of a countless number of pseudo-things or pseudo-*substantiae* that go on peopling our world which is already crammed with things and objects. (cf. Léon Brunschvicg, *Les âges de l'Intelligence* p. 62)

There is a celebrated passage in the *Categoriae*, in which Aristotle (or whoever its author is) states that the constituent parts of substances — e.g. head, hands or feet as constituents of an individual body — are not, for the reason of being 'parts' of something, to be denied the appellation of *protē ousiā* or 'primary substances' (*Cat.* 3 a 29-32). This simply means that any parts of any individual thing which happen to be sufficiently prominent and conspicuous for the human mind and which, in particular, happen to be in possession of specific names to designate them, can (or even must) be considered as so many individual things. Thus our body which is no doubt a substance, is made to be composed of many individual substances, such as



*head, face, forehead, brow, eyes, ears, neck, shoulders* etc., etc. In exactly the same way such outside 'things' as *mountain, peak, valley, top, bottom, tip, branch, bough*, and the like, come to being, owing their 'thingness' to this process of hypostatization of prominent portions of things. This mode of thinking is evidently the first definite step towards bringing pseudo-entities into existence.

The next step will be to represent natural events or processes as 'things': *light, flash, fire, flame, wave, rain, wind, storm*, etc. to mention some random examples. It must be noted that this process of reification is greatly helped by the very natural tendency common to many languages (and which is particularly prominent in the languages of the Indo-European and Semitic families) to express whatever becomes the subject of a verb in the form of a 'noun'. And this gives birth to a very common sort of verbal superstition that to any word standing as the grammatical subject of a proposition or as the grammatical object of a verb, there exists, if not in the empirical world, at least somewhere in a mysterious non-empirical world, a real entity corresponding. (cf. A. Ayer, *op. cit.*, Chap. I) As L. Bloomfield pointed out; *fire*, according to physicists, is not a thing but rather an action or process, and is therefore more appropriately to be described by the verb *burn* than the noun *fire* (*Language*, Ch. 16, 2). But no sooner have we begun to say, for example, 'the fire burns and gives out light and heat', than we fall into the danger of reading into nature bogus entities capable of performing miraculous actions: thus in the case here envisaged a self-subsistent entity *fire* becomes postulated and is made to perform some kind of action called *burning* and to produce, furthermore, other substances named *light* and *heat*. Western people who would gently smile at the too naively tautological nature of a Turkish phrase "yağmur yağıyor" (lit. 'rain rains' for 'it rains,') or "kar yağıyor" (lit. 'snow rains' for 'it snows') "dolu yağıyor" (lit. 'hail rains') — let it be remarked by the way that examples of exactly the same type of expression are met with in Ancient Chinese, too; thus in Tso Chuan 左傳: "Ta yü hsüeh" 大雨雪 'greatly rained snow' (Duke Yin, 9, etc.), "Ch'iu ta yü pao" 秋大雨雹 'autumn, greatly rained hail' (Duke Hsi), or even "Yü chung yü Sung" 雨蚤于宋 'rained locusts in Sung,' meaning that a swarm of locusts fell like rain in the country of Sung — those people, I say, very rarely notice the fact that they are doing no better when they say for instance 'the wind blows' or 'the light flashed'. In the language of Stuart Chase, the better physicist in such a case would be the child or, perhaps, even a Hopi Indian, who can boldly express the whole dynamic process by means of the so-called one-word sentence — 'flash!' — which is neither a verb nor a noun, neither subject nor predicate, but rather all of them at one and the same time (cf. *Power of Words* Chap. 10). Only this last remark of Chase on Hopi Indian language (which is doubtless largely based on the account of the fact offered by Benjamin Whorf), sounds rather suspiciously like special pleading. The truth seems to be rather that the language of Hopi Indians, as most American

Indian languages, belongs properly to the group of languages characterized by the preponderance of the verbal type of expression. We must remember that among 'primitive' languages there are some which have not yet succeeded in raising themselves even to the stage of the differentiation of nominal and verbal expression, which consequently seem to remain content with a set of entirely amorphous forms. Just above this most primitive stage of formlessness and indeterminacy stand those languages which, though still sticking in a large measure to the 'original indifference of noun and verb' as Cassirer has called it, already show a marked predilection for this or that aspect of the undifferentiated form. Theoretically this gives birth to two basic types of language structure: the nominal and the verbal, though of course the distinction between the two cannot in point of fact be a hard and fast one. The nominal languages are largely dominated by the category of the substantive, as expression of the static object; here not only all attributes and relations are made to be essentially dependent upon it, but even those occurrences and actions which are most manifestly of a dynamic nature are very often drawn into the static substantival form. In the verbal languages, on the contrary, everything turns round the category of verb, as the dynamic centre of all expression; indeed nothing, it seems, can remain here wholly static, even 'things' and their objective relations and attributes tend to be transposed into the verbal form, or at least tend to be significantly enmeshed with the dynamic structure of the whole and thereby assume a strongly verbal character. (cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, I, Kap. III, 4, 3). From this it would at once be evident that nouns are not solely to be blamed for bringing in bogus entities; for if the nominal languages are liable to produce pseudo-things indefinitely, the verbal idioms are no less apt to generate pseudo-activities. In either case then, whether Hopi Indian or Indo-European, what is linguistically expressed is not the objective structure of reality itself but the result of the subjective operation by which the human mind elaborates the given chaos of sensory impressions into an object or activity. But of this more will be said later.

In the above-cited passage, Stuart Chase insists (rightly to my mind) on the necessity of realizing what enormous power the 'subject-predicate' form of proposition has over our ways of interpreting the world. The common sense of the practical man does not admit *pure action* without a subject; if the experience of 'flash!' is to occur at all as a real event, there must be something, some entity, to perform that action; this brings in at once the pseudo-entity *light*, which modern science tells us is not a thing existing in any way in the outer world independently of us and our senses, and this pseudo-thing is made to act as the 'subject' of *flash*, both in ontological and grammatical senses of the word. 'Aristotelian logic,' writes Louis Rougier, 'leads towards introducing a great number of hypothetical substances, of fictitious material mediums, as for example *ether* 'ether' to serve as the subject of the verb *onduler* 'undulate', in spite of the fact that,

under this view, one would be compelled to bestow on this substratum a lot of contradictory physical properties, which are, moreover, quite incompatible with the negative result of experiments made with a view to proving their absolute movement in reference to a medium at rest' (*Pseudo-problèmes résolus et soulevés par la logique d'Aristote* in Actes d. C. I. d. Phil. Scien. 1935, III). It is deplorable that the general semanticists — and some logical empiricists, too, who have attempted to subject natural language to a critical scrutiny — seem to assume that the subject-predicate form of logic is one of the most salient characteristics of *Indo-European* way of thinking, that it *is*, in short, the logic of Western thought. The metaphysics of Aristotle springing from this type of propositional structure is, according to their view, neither more nor less than 'the spontaneous metaphysics of Indo-European languages, and in particular of the Greek language' (L. Rougier), and not, as Bergson held, the spontaneous metaphysics of the human mind. We often hear semanticists argue in a very confident manner that in Chinese for instance the subject-predicate form of sentence is not a normal one, and yet (they add) this language has proved itself capable of giving expression to marvellously intellectual and highly abstract speculations. This is not only erroneous but very misleading. The picture of the 'normal' structure of Chinese sentence given by Stuart Chase — who follows here a Chinese writer — in the above-quoted book (pp. 104 — 106) is not at all fair to the grammatical facts of Chinese. For even in Ancient Chinese the normal pattern of declarative statements was of the subject-predicate variety. The detailed consideration of this point belongs, however, to another place than the present study. For the moment we might be content with saying simply that the subject-predicate structure, far from being a peculiarity of Western thought, seems to be normal and universal wherever the human mind has attained a certain level of logical thinking as far, at least, as it is carried on by means of verbal symbols.

In an illuminating paper written in 1876, *Words, Logic and Grammar*, (in Coll. Pap.) praised by I. A. Richards even as having marked the beginning of a new epoch for linguistic studies, Henry Sweet pointed out the danger of regarding an adjective like *white* as 'concrete' and an abstract noun — the very name, be it noted, is significant enough — like *whiteness* as 'abstract'. The truth is, he rightly argued, that *white* is as much an abstract as *whiteness* is, and both are absolutely identical in meaning. In his view, '*Whiteness* is an attribute of snow' has identically the same meaning as '*Snow is white*', and '*white snow*', the difference between the two being chiefly grammatical: we change, that is to say, *white* into *whiteness* simply as a formal device enabling us to make an attribute-word the subject of a proposition, to talk about an attribute without direct reference to the possessor of that attribute. Such a formal device, however useful it may seem for practical purposes, tends from the very nature of the case to produce the hallucination of 'abstract things' existing quite apart from individual things. That *white* is an adjective

makes us feel as if it were an objective real quality inherent in real things; that *whiteness* is grammatically an abstract noun, on the contrary, gives us the false impression of its being independent of its possessors, something self-subsistent, or even being some entity of a higher order. This of course is not liable to occur in a language like Classical Chinese, which has practically no formal criteria to mark off various word-classes from each other; in Chinese 'white' is 白 "pai, \*b'ak" regardless of whether it is used attributively or predicatively, or again as the subject of a proposition. In such a phrase as "shēng pu ju ssù" (lit. 'liv(-ing) not equal to dy(-ing)' i. e. 'Death is better than life') we cannot decide whether life and death are represented as 'things' (life, death), or as 'qualities' (living, dead), or finally as 'events' or 'actions' (to live, to die). This, however, does not prevent Classical Chinese from falling into the danger of hypostatizing. Chinese, in spite of the absence of the external markers for various word-classes is no less full of pseudo-things than any other known language.

We have seen how substance-words, developing into genuine grammatical nouns, come to acquire a peculiar sort of structural potentiality, and how this latter tends to produce in our minds a limitless number of pseudo-substances. Now similar considerations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, also to attribute-words and phenomenon-words as they transform themselves into adjectives and verbs respectively. The point was well brought out by Allan Gardiner when he stated that instead of considering the so-called parts of speech as real distinctions based on the nature of the objects which words refer to, we should rather regard them as various modes of linguistic presentation of things. Thus the grammatical category of 'noun' presents anything as a thing, while 'verb' presents anything whatsoever as an action or event. In the denominative verb to *cage*, he argues, reference is made to the thing (a cage), but it is presented not as a thing but as an action; in the noun *assassination* reference is made to an action, but the action is presented not as an action but as a thing. (*Speech and Language* § 4, cf. also § 41). To this we might add that the adjective, as another primordial and indispensable part of speech, presents anything as a quality or property possessed by some substance or substances. Thus in English the verb to *heat*, the noun *heat*, and the adjective *hot* belong to three different parts of speech but all express one and the same physical event; the first, namely, describes the event as an action, the second as a substance, while the last presents it as a quality residing in a substance and characterizing it temporarily or permanently.

The point I am making will best be brought out by a consideration of such ordinary phrases as 'a hard student,' 'a heavy drinker'. We may remark that adjectives are in most cases (logistically speaking) independent functions on a par with nouns and verbs, so that a proposition like 'X is a red building', for example, may be analysed as a logical conjunction of two propositions: 'X is a building' and 'X is red'. But this does not hold with those propositions whose predicates

are of the type just mentioned. For we cannot evidently analyse the proposition 'X (e. g. John) is a slow driver' into 'X is a driver and X is slow'; this we cannot do because here the adjective 'slow' operates not as a general characterizer of X, but exclusively as a modifier of the verb 'drive' contained in the noun 'driver' (cf. H. Reichenbach, *Elements of Symbolic Logic* § 53). In other words, the adjective 'slow' does not describe X in general, the sentence being completely equivalent to 'X drives slowly' with an addition of the idea of an extended tense 'always'. Linguistically, however, (since English does not permit such a construction as 'X is a *slowly* driver', which would, as Reichenbach points out, be most logical) what is really a manner of action is presented as a constant quality of the performer of the action.

That grammatical similarity might (or rather, very often does) conceal factual or logical dissimilarity has been made evident by the problem of 'ethical terms' already alluded to, which has recently come to engage the most vivid and most controversial interests of Empiricist philosophers. Their analysis of value qualities, whatever one may say against it, has at least the great merit of having brought to light the important difference that exists between ordinary adjectives standing for the so-called primary and secondary qualities of things such as *white* or *cold* on the one hand, and on the other those adjectives which represent value qualities such as *good*, *bad*, *graceful*, *beautiful* and *ugly*; it has succeeded in showing that the latter indicate not so much objective properties or qualities of things as the speaker's own emotional reactions towards them. Man has long been a victim to the illusion that the things and actions described by any of the adjectives belonging to this class possessed those properties really and objectively, ignoring thereby that these adjectives have properly much more to do with the expression of man's own emotions and feelings than with pure outside fact. But if this strange thing has been possible it is simply because the adjective as a form-class has a special kind of structural meaning which may generate a host of pseudo-qualities even where in reality there is no objectively discernible quality.

In view of these considerations, Ernst Leisi in the above-quoted book (II, A), has very aptly introduced the notion of 'hypostatization through the word' *Hypostasierung durch das Wort* as the guiding principle of the semantic study of words. Starting from the fact that the single word *triangle* and the combination *three-sided rectilinear figure* have exactly the same meaning—i. e. the same denotation, in our terminology—he argues that the difference between the two expressions consists in the difference of *Anschauung*—i. e. connotation—suggested by them; 'triangle' describes the thing as a substance represented without accidents, that is, as a member of the class of triangles, whereas 'three-sided rectilinear figure' presents the same thing as a substance (figure) with two individual characteristics (three-sided, rectilinear). When, speaking more generally, anything is described by a single word, the thing, whatever its denotative nature may be,

is apt to be represented as an actualization without accidents of a 'thing in itself' (akzidentienfreie Realisation eines "Dinges an sich"), whereas the same thing, described by a complex of words such as 'three-sided rectilinear figure' can hardly produce the representation of a simple *thing in itself*, but is very commonly represented as a complex of properties standing outside the *thing in itself*. 'Mythology, scholastic realism, and Platonic idealism, these are all grandiose examples of the tendency shared by all speech-communities towards objectifying (or even personifying) any phenomenon whatsoever, in so far as it can be designated by a single word, and endowing it with an independent existence cut off from all other phenomena, i. e. towards exalting it to the position of a substance without accidents.' This process of hypostatization is seen to be active in other categories than the noun; thus in an exactly similar manner the adjective tends to represent anything as an independent, free 'quality', and the verb as an independent, free 'action'.

It will be of no small relevance here to note that, quite independently of these modern theories of grammar and syntax in the West, an extensive inquiry into the grammatical constitution of his mother tongue has led a Japanese philologist to astonishingly similar conclusions concerning the structural characteristics of the parts of speech. I mean Yoshio Yamada, 山田孝雄 who, ever since he wrote his celebrated *Nihon Bumpō Ron* 日本文法論 (Treatise on Japanese Grammar) in 1908, has repeatedly insisted on the necessity of approaching the problem of the parts of speech from a mentalistic point of view. Against those who hold, for instance, that adjectives are a class of words standing for all sorts of qualities, while verbs are words standing for actions or states, he rightly points out that such a theory can never satisfactorily account for the existence of a host of adjectives—e. g. "sabishi" (lonely)—which describe states rather than qualities. Nor can we emend it, he argues, by saying that the verb represents an action, and the adjective a state; for in that case the existence of many verbs—e. g. "niru" (to resemble)—whose meaning approximates to 'state' rather than to 'actions', must remain unaccounted for. Besides, we have in Japanese innumerable pairs of words derived from one and the same stem, of which one member is an adjective and the other a verb, e. g.

"takashi" high	.....	"takamu" highten	.....
"yowashi" weak	.....	"yowamu" weaken	..... "yowaru" become weak
"nibushi" dull	.....	"niburu" become dull	
"shiroshi" white	.....	"shiromu" become white or whitish	.....
"kurushi" painful	.....	"kurushimu" get pained	.....
"sawagashi" noisy	.....	"sawagu" make a noise	.....
"nagekawashi" deplorable	.....	"nageku" deplore	.....
"urameshi" rancorous	.....	"uramu" have a rancour	.....
		etc., etc.	

'No one would doubt', he argues, 'that in "kokoro hanahada tanoshi" ([My] heart [is] very happy) the word "tanoshi" is grammatically an adjective, whereas in "Kokoro hanahada tanoshimu" ([My] heart very-much *happies*, as it were) the word "tanoshimu" will never be mistaken for an adjective; everybody will recognize its being a verb. And yet it should be remarked that the idea underlying these two words refers exactly to one and the same state of mind. ....' From this he concludes that the discrimination of the parts of speech must be based 'not on the nature of the objective phenomenal world itself, but on how the objective phenomena, whether things, qualities, actions, or states, are represented in our minds'; in other words, on how 'our language presents them to our minds.' Thus in the present case, for instance, 'when anything is presented or represented as of a permanently fixed or subsistent character, it becomes an adjective', but that same attribute may very well be pictured in mind also as of a changing, temporary, and fleeting nature, in which case it is a verb.' (Yoshio Yamada, *Nihon Bumpōgaku Gairon* 日本文法学概論 'Principles of the Science of Japanese Grammar', 1936, Chap. X).

It will be easy to see that this sort of structural consideration may rightly be extended from the parts of speech to the wider sphere of syntax in general. In fact, every name-word, as we have just observed, has a grammatical status, which makes it behave more or less independently of the factual state of affairs to which it refers. Now if such be the case, it would be quite natural for us to conclude that syntax—which is in effect nothing more than the ways we put our words together—is possessed of a peculiar sort of structural power, which tends to work in its own way irrespective of how the form of the facts to be denoted is objectively structured. Take for instance the much discussed 'subject' — 'object' sentence pattern; we may, for the convenience of explanation, illustrate it by the following four examples: (1) 'I kill a spider', (2) 'I fear a spider', (3) 'I see the moon' (4) 'I dig a hole'. These sentences, when looked at from the syntactic viewpoint are exactly the same; they all suggest that a substance (here a person) represented by the 'subject' performs some action expressed by the verb, and that action influences in a certain positive way another substance expressed by the 'object'. Notwithstanding this apparent uniformity, however, the states of affairs these sentences stand for are widely different; they are not saying at all the same sort of thing. For when I kill a spider I actually do something to it, but when I fear it, or when I see it, it is not the spider but rather I myself who am directly affected; when, further, I dig a hole, I can in the very nature of the case do nothing to the object called 'hole' for this is after all a 'privative' noun and does not stand for anything positive. And yet these important factual differences are disguised by the complete similarity of syntactical form which has its own structural meaning: 'the subject' is the performer of an action, the 'object' the undergoer of that action (cf. Fries, *op. cit.* IX).

Reference has repeatedly made to the 'subject-predicate' sentence-pattern: structurally, this type of expression means that there is some substance denoted by the subject-word and that this substance has a quality or property which happens to be denoted by the predicate. Thus we say, 'The tree is green', for example. We may profitably remember here Fr. Mauthner's celebrated words that if we wanted to be true to reality, we should rather say, instead, 'The tree greens me.' But 'the tree greens me', though irreproachable in thought, is (at least in English) impossible syntax. We can say, 'The sun warms me', but we cannot say, 'The sky blues me', and we are compelled to say, 'The sky is blue', transforming thereby the two experiences of a very similar character into extremely different types of thought (cf. I. A. Richards, *op. cit.* Ch. XVI). Examples might be multiplied indefinitely, but enough has been said, I believe, to show that there are everywhere traps in ordinary discourse for those who assume that grammatical forms give clues to the logical or objective form of the facts they want to express.

'I see nobody on the road,' said Alice.

'I only wish I had such eyes' the king remarked in a fretful tone. 'To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too!'

(*Through the Looking Glass*)

Indeed, from the structural point of view, 'Nobody came' stands, as A. G. N. Flew has remarked (*Essays on Logic and Language* I, Introduction), exactly on the same footing as 'Somebody came'. And this similarity of formal meanings may mislead people quite unconsciously to a certain feeling, if not to an explicit belief or thought as in the case of the King of Lewis Carroll, of 'nobody' being (in a very queer way, to be sure,) a certain kind of person capable of performing some action just as 'somebody' is. That this, though apparently absurd, has very often actually occurred with eminent philosophers, Gilbert Ryle has shown in a paper entitled *Systematically Misleading Expressions* (now reproduced in the collection of essays on *Logic and Language* just referred to, Ch. II); he has chosen three main types of expression that are especially liable to engender philosophical misconstructions in looking grammatically like denoting expressions which in fact they are not, and called them 'systematically misleading'. It will, however, be necessary to remember in this connection that all expressions are after all more or less misleading; there is no *completely* non-misleading type of expression in any language; the structural overmeanings of words have their own independent laws of working, and in this sense our language does not and can not picture reality. But this is not the place to go into all the issues raised by this problem, though they are evidently of profound importance for the general theory of linguistic meaning; for that would take us too far afield for the purpose of this little book. I have, I think, given enough instances to show in what sense the semantic resources of our language may and must be viewed as essentially based on mental evocation; in what sense, therefore, the terms 'magic' and 'magical' must be



understood when applied to the behaviour of words and expressions at the most fundamental level of the semantic constitution of ordinary language. 'Evocation' or 'suggestion' of course does not necessarily spell 'magic', but the relationship existing between the two is of the most intimate kind, and the transition from the former to the latter is among the easiest and most natural things to happen. This acceded to, there immediately arise some consequential problems concerning the origin of linguistic *symbols* (as opposed to mere *signs*), to which we shall turn in the following sections.

## Chapter IX

### SPONTANEOUS RITUAL AND THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

The main lesson to be drawn from the preceding chapter is that language seems to have, in its very semantic constitution, a certain fundamental magical predisposition, which may very easily be developed and directed to serve the ends of genuine magic. Furthermore, we could even make out a case for the supposition that this 'predisposition' is in reality not so much an as yet unrealized possibility as an enfeebled survival from an early age in the history of language formation, when language as such was somehow coloured by magic.

In fact, all our thinking seems to have led us more and more to this view, that magic, far from being something extraneous to language, is an essential, vital component of linguistic meaning, that, in short, magic lies at the very root of all language behaviour. It would appear that the spirit of magic, clinging tenaciously to all the phases of our language, has completely permeated it. But no sooner have we accredited this theory than we find ourselves confronted with another serious question as to the historical source of all this. Thus we are led almost inevitably to the most formidable task of finding some explanation of the mutual relations of language and magic, and this, again, leads us to the problem of the genesis of language itself. For the discussion of the fundamental nature of language stands in the last analysis inseparably connected with that of the ultimate secret of linguistic origins.

Now if the view which I have put forward tentatively is correct, if, in other words, magic has interpenetrated with the meaning function of the word so completely that we seem entitled in a certain sense to speak straightforwardly of the magical character of language, it would follow from it that there must have been a time in the history of humanity when language as a whole was deeply immersed in magical spirit.

I need, I think, spend little time insisting that the quest of linguistic origins, fascinating and absorbing as it is, is almost bound to be a failure. Since the latter half of the last century when metaphysical speculations were particularly rife concerning the beginnings of human language, various hypotheses have been advanced, but almost all of them belong not so much to the domain of linguistic theory as to the realm of sheer fantasy. The truth is that we entirely lack the means of carrying back the history of language beyond the limit of five thousand years at most, but this is of course a mere nothing in terms of anthropological

time. Nor are the languages of the present-day primitive races to be utilized as materials directly illustrating the linguistic conditions of primeval man, for they have undoubtedly many centuries of evolution behind them. In such a condition of affairs, it would seem wisest not to attempt, even in the most tentative and hypothetical way of thinking, to surprise the secret of the genesis of language; the best policy will be to remain content with suggesting that the experience of linguistic meaning has probably much to do with magic which is an *Urerlebnis* of man. And this is, as we saw, precisely what Walter Porzig has done in *Das Wunder der Sprache*. In the above-quoted passage from that book there stand the following highly significant words: 'To mean something by means of speech is nothing less than a weakened form of magical binding'; but he has not attempted to develop this line of thought very far, thus wisely avoiding to draw himself and his readers into great perplexities. And yet, in spite of all this, there are, among students of language as well as among scholars concerned with the essential constitution of the human mind in general, increasing signs of a revival of interest in the problem of linguistic origins. And no wonder; for anyone who would grapple seriously with the fundamental problem of the human nature can hardly dispense with some working hypothesis regarding the emergence of language even though it is bound to be no more than an in greater or lesser degree plausible conjecture based upon as good as no empirical evidence. It seems, moreover, not at all improbable that we can make our hypothesis much more defensible if we, instead of confining ourselves to the plane of the purely linguistic, adopt some wider perspective and look upon the whole problem, as E. Cassirer has done for example, as a particular case of a much broader one of the possible origin of symbolic behaviour in general.

Since, then, all quest of linguistic origins is bound to remain largely in the realm of conjecture, everybody is in principle free to adopt any theory he likes provided only that it be such that in the light of its certain relevant facts appear to fit together better than they do on any other supposition. So for the purpose of contrasting, I propose to examine at first the position which is precisely antipodal to the one I am going to defend. I mean the standpoint of those who are strongly of opinion that the birth of language is wholly pre-magical. We may cite as an illustrious example the conception of Karl Bühler. His position may be described in a very succinct way by the dictum which he cites: *primum vivere deinde philosophari*, and which he believes to hold ontogenetically as well as phylogenetically. He argues that both in nursery and in primeval woods the way the first name-words are born can only be wholly pre-magical (*vor-magisch*). 'The child whom we can observe,' he writes, 'acquires his earliest stock of name-words *before* any speculative magical attitude begins to exert an active influence. And even when the magical attitude has actually come into being, it does not in

any way permeate and saturate all the life-situations of the child with its spirit, but always leaves another line of development entirely free.' Against Lévy-Bruhl and his followers among ethnographical sociologists and J. Piaget among child-psychologists, his conception emphasizes the existence of the *völlig magie-freie Experimentierhaltung*, which does play a decisive role in the early phases of language formation. To insert a hypothetical stage of *magische Denkweise* in the earliest course of human history and to attempt to view everything from such a perspective is, according to Bühler, to commit the age-old error of *proteron hysteron*. 'The man who is just in process of development speculates, on the whole, not *before* but *after* creating something; thus in the case here envisaged, he speculates on the names of things only when they are there before his eyes.' (*Sprachtheorie* III, 14, 1).

It is to be remarked, to begin with, that for Bühler the magical attitude of life does not constitute part of *vivere*, but belongs rather to the domain of otiose *philosophari*; it is essentially speculation, 'afterthought' in the literal sense of the word. The fact of the matter is that, in raising his objection against those who believe the existence of an intimate organic connection between language and magic and their joint development, he is thinking obviously of such extravagant superstitious conceptions of language as I attempted to describe in the second and third chapters of this book, to which certainly his remarks apply with admirable exactitude. It would indeed be a case of downright *proteron hysteron* if we imagined that the humanoid creature who hit upon the happy idea of creating the first name-words, must have been already in full possession of formally standardized magical practices and an exuberant growth of superstitious beliefs concerning the things of the surrounding world of reality. We know, on archeological and anthropological evidence, these to have developed among mankind only gradually and slowly. But manifestly it will not do, on that account, to negate the important part played by the magical tendency of man in the process of language formation. It must be borne in mind that magic, as understood in the deeper and more dynamic sense of an inalienable propensity of the human mind for symbolization, begins to work far below the level of standardized magic; it is precisely this symbol-making tendency common to all human beings that constitutes the real fountainhead of all magical practices and beliefs. Magic thus understood stands undoubtedly first and foremost among the vital concerns of primitive man; it is not *philosophari*, it is his *vivere*, not an idle mental pursuit, but a vital ingredient of his pragmatic relation to the environment, the mysterious and indispensable pivot of his life which determines the main lines of his attitude towards reality. It is magic in this sense that we must take into account in seeking to unravel the mystery of the basic act of Meaning.

The possibility of constructing a very coherent theory of linguistic origins without taking into account the magical dispositions of the human mind has more recently been shown by another noted psychologist, G. Révész. I have already

alluded to his work on the origin and prehistory of language, *Ursprung und Vorgeschichte der Sprache*, in which the author, without deliberately and explicitly opposing, to be sure, the view of those scholars who attach central importance to the magical contexts of language, has nonetheless completely discarded the notion of magic even as a subsidiary factor of language formation. Put in a nutshell, his is a theory of three stages—cry (*Zuruf*), call (*Anruf*), word (*Wort*)—based on a still more comprehensive and fundamental theory of ‘contact’ (*Kontakttheorie*). According to his creed, the innate need of ‘contact’ (purely physical at the lowest stage of animal life, but afterwards becoming more and more mental and psychological) constitutes the basis and the necessary condition of all development and differentiation of various social forms of animals. This basic need of coming into closer contact with each other holds sway over the whole domain of their existence and determines the process of the evolution of diverse means of communication, of which human language is but one, although of course the latest and most remarkable instance. With the emergence of *Zuruf*, the pre-verbal inarticulate cry addressed to a more or less definite group, such as the warning-cry of certain species of animal, the first decisive stage of evolution has been attained; the stage, namely, which marks the real beginning of the prehistory of language, for the cry as here to be understood is evidently the most primitive form of communication. Next comes the stage of *Anruf*, the call addressed, this time not to all the members of the group as a whole and indiscriminately, but to some determinate individual member of the group, with a view to demanding of the latter the satisfaction of a desire. Another characteristic feature of this type of communication is that the utterer of the sign, whether animal or man, usually gives by means of some auxiliaries such as manual gesture, the direction of the eye, and the like, spatial indications and, in some cases, even directly points at the object desired. The ‘call’ in this sense is already definitely imperative in nature.

Now this characteristically imperative function of the sign remaining still largely implicit at the stage of the ‘call’, becomes entirely explicit with the advent of the next stage, the stage of the ‘word’, which, moreover, as Révész believes, immediately follows the preceding one without any intermediary forms. Thus, in his opinion, we must insert a specific stage of *Imperativsprache* (imperative-language), in which everything is made to function in the capacity of the imperative, between the last of the stages of linguistic prehistory and the emergence of the ‘indicative-language’ which is the authentic type of human speech as ordinarily understood. But of this I have already spoken in an earlier context. So without lingering over that, attention must be called to another point of decisive importance. The question now to consider is this: admitting the theoretical hypothesis of Révész to be the most natural one to adopt as regards the earliest stage of human language, are we really entitled to pay no attention to an

extraordinarily mighty formative influence that must have been exerted by magical ideas upon the life of our forefathers living just at that critical moment when the rudiments of linguistic symbolism were definitely dawning in their minds? We must call to mind that the higher apes and certain species of birds have most of the speech organs, and that in the case of birds, in particular, even the tendency to spontaneous babbling, the ‘impulse to chatter’, is not wanting, which is deemed by modern psychologists to be characteristic of early childhood among human beings. And yet, neither the development of the vocal organs in the anthropoid apes nor the unmistakable existence of a natural interest in sounds in birds has led them to the creation of anything deserving to be called the prototype of articulate language. There is, such a vast gulf between the animal utterance and human speech as to make any theory of natural development almost impossible. We must conclude that the imperative-language as the earliest stage of all human speech cannot have evolved, as Révész has assumed, from the preceding stage of the ‘call’ by a kind of natural process without any intermediaries. What, then, has caused this deep cleavage between man and brute as regards their means of communication? We can, I think, successfully account for the marvellous fact of the creation of language only by introducing the notion of magical tendency which is highly characteristic of the human mind under primitive conditions.

Let us, by way of a beginning, set forth briefly a peculiar theory of linguistic origins apparently standing in strong contrast to the theories thus far examined. It is the very arresting and suggestive hypothesis put forward by Susanne Langer in her important work on the significance of symbolic behaviour, *Philosophy in a New Key* (Chap. 5) that I have here in mind. Starting from the basal philosophic intuition shared by eminent writers on linguistic theory like Ernst Cassirer and Edward Sapir, she maintains that the most primitive, and consequently the most original function of human language is not, as so often presumed without careful scrutiny, communication; that language must rather be regarded as primarily a concrete manifestation of ‘the tendency to see reality symbolically’ (Sapir), of which the communicative aspect is but a secondary and derivative function. ‘Language is a very high form of symbolism’, and as such it cannot have arisen except in a species in which the liberation from practical affairs was well on the way, and the process of symbolization at least in its lower forms already in full force. This amounts to saying in such a theory like hers, that language could only have originated in communal life with a wealth of flourishing dance-forms, antics, symbolic gestures, and the like; that, in short, ritual is the real cradle of language. Following closely Donovan, who in the late nineteenth century published in *Mind* an essay with a highly significant title, ‘*The Festal Origin of Human Speech*’, Langer argues that festive occasions may probably have served not only

as a general background but even more directly as the very matrix of linguistic symbols. In the midst of festal excitement, the theory runs, when the emotional tension necessary for endowing the voice with a peculiar sort of symbolic value was keyed to the highest pitch, particular syllables may very well have become associated with some particular objects, persons, or actions. And this association once established, it is easily conceivable that the mere sight of the object tended to stimulate people to utter the corresponding syllable or string of syllables even outside the total festive situation that had given it birth. It will be evident that such a semantic nexus formed between the word and the object will continue to be tightened through innumerable acts of the same type ever more securely until the object may be conjured up in the mind of the hearer even in its absence. When this point is reached, the sound may have become a *representative* symbol.

Now this argument, which is as a working hypothesis no less coherent than that of Révész and perhaps even more suggestive, may nevertheless be said to have its own difficulties. Setting aside all peripheral difficulties, I will point out what seems to me the chief weakness of the Donovan-Langer theory. In brief, it consists in the fact that here again magic is taken largely in the sense of standardized magic, as the very choice of the title '*Festal Origin*' bears witness. And it is doubtless this that gives their whole theory an utterly false appearance of being too fantastic and imaginative a fiction to be relied upon. We see that upon their hypothesis, language is made to originate in the communal festive occasion of dance and song; in other words, the origination of speech is attributed to the very specific state of the minds of the festal players during their great excitement. The voice, we are told, accompanying ritualized, symbolic gestures, would become intimately associated with the central figure of the celebration, human, animal or other, and would tend to preserve this association even after the end of the annual feast.

The broad assertion that the genesis of human language must have needed as its immediate background some such extraordinary emotional tension of the mind as is usually observed on ceremonial occasions may probably be laid down quite correctly. It might seem quite safe to say, furthermore, that there must have been a wealth of symbolic gestures to confer upon the accompanying voice a peculiar kind of expressive and symbolic value, for, otherwise, the fact of the semantic symbolism of the word would remain hardly accounted for. But in spite of all that, it requires a considerable amount of strain on our credulity to believe that language could only be formed in the furnace of festal excitement, that, to wit, it is the product of sanctioned ritual acts. And this will be enough to make us suspect that the account of the matter will need amendment and some further qualification.

For the purpose of making the above theory a much more plausible and usable

hypothesis, I will introduce into it another important notion, namely that of the 'spontaneous magic' once more drawing inspiration from the masterly discussion of the magical processes among primitive people by B. Malinowski. In one of his noteworthy papers, *Magic, Science, and Religion*, he teaches us that, when we want to penetrate to the hidden fountainhead of magical belief and practice, it is essential not to confine our attention to the plane of traditionally fixed ritual forms but to go down a step deeper tracing each of them to its ultimate source in a real subjective experience. To put it in a nutshell, Malinowski's main thesis comes to this, that to most types of formalized ritual there corresponds, as a rule, a spontaneous ritual of emotional expression or of a forecast of the wished-for results. The foundations of magical ritual, he insists, are not taken from the air; they must have originated from a number of passionate experiences actually lived through. In the midst of his instinctive and pragmatic life, primitive man comes very often to an impasse where he feels himself lost, forsaken by his knowledge, and his desire thwarted. Such a situation naturally tends to induce a strained state in his nervous system, which again cannot but drive him to some frenzied behaviour as a sort of substitute activity. Thus a thwarted desire takes hold of a man only the more strongly because he feels himself impotent; it becomes easily an obsession, and when the breaking point is reached, the pent-up psycho-physiological tension gushes out in passionate uncontrollable gestures. The spontaneous acts and works—the 'spontaneous ritual' as so aptly named by Malinowski—that are thus engendered as natural responses of man to such a situation are of the most various kinds. The man under the domination of impotent anger, for example, would spontaneously clench his fist and break out into threatening gestures against his enemy; the man dominated by some irresistible desire would very naturally be driven to a mimic representation of the desired end, and so forth.

The point of the greatest relevance to our main subject is that this 'spontaneous ritual' of overflowing passion or desire is haunted by the idea of the object whether desired or feared. As Malinowski emphasizes, even when man loses control over himself entirely, and is driven to the extreme limit of frenzy and wild excitement, there presides over all this outburst of emotion a very clear image of the end. Indeed it is the image of the object of desire, hatred, or fear, that constitutes the very heart and core of this kind of reaction, providing it with a dynamic motive-force and organizing the whole process into what may be really deserving of the name of 'spontaneous ritual.' It will be observed at once that the first primitive form of pantomimic movement here described involves explicitly or implicitly a factor of supreme significance for the progressive development from the animal cry to the specifically human kind of sign behaviour. I mean the pointing gesture as an attenuation, or better, spiritualization of the more original grasping movement, the *demonstrare* which is both physical and mental. We may remark by the way that even in the higher anthropoid apes pointing



movement has not developed beyond the most rudimentary stage. But without this factor of half-mental and half-physical pointing, the 'articulation' which is admittedly the most characteristic feature of human language is entirely inconceivable; without it, language, if language it is, must ever remain in the stage of an as yet undifferentiated vague indication of the whole situation. Just imagine our primitive man under the sway of obsessive desire pointing at a certain definite object and uttering certain sounds at the same time; in the midst of the incessant flux of consciousness something enduring and permanent has for the first time been arrested, and a decisive step towards the development of the naming function has been taken; the first beginnings of objectivization as the necessary condition of all sensory—and eventually conceptual—knowledge are already clearly there.

The indicative gesture in question, besides supplying in this way the nucleus of the semantic association between sound and object, tends most naturally to subserve another important function, namely that of developing a specific class of words whose task it is precisely to 'point' at this or that particular object. It will need no special stressing that the pointing movement as described above, whether physical or mental, would lead directly to the origination of various kinds of demonstrative terms and their gradual multiplication, for they are no more than immediate substitutes of the pointing gesture, which is itself nothing but a symbolic metamorphosis of the grasping or clutching movement of the hand. It is common knowledge to-day that 'demonstratives'—*Zeigwörter* in Bühler's terminology, and 'egocentric particulars' as Russell has called them—form a specific stratum of linguistic signs and, side by side with that of name-words, play the most important role as the very basis of our psycho-physiological mechanism. Thus we see that the general situational context of spontaneous ritual drives men towards generating the two fundamental classes of symbols, name-words and demonstrative words, which are both equally essential for the true characterization of all human speech.

Exception may perhaps be taken to the theory just sketched on the ground that even if the role played by the indicative gesture might be acknowledged as an essential factor of language formation, yet it manifestly will not do to insist in addition that the drama should be enacted against the very particular background of spontaneous magic. It is an empirical fact that in savage societies all phenomena and things are classified into two strictly separate categories; the natural or familiar, and the supernormal or unaccountable. The primitive has two domains of reality to live in, the domain of the profane and that of the sacred, the world of sober practical activities and the world dominated by superstition, ritualism, and magic. And both would appear to have an equal claim to the honour of having caused the origination of human language. It would seem that the focal point of the whole process lies after all in the occurrence of the pointing gesture, and the context in which it occurs, whether magical or normal, will,

on the face of it, make little or no difference. If such a marvellous efficacy may justifiably be attributed to the deictic movement, why should it be confined to magical contexts? Cannot we reasonably expect the same thing to happen in normal, work-a-day situations? Thus we have come back to the point which we have already encountered in discussing the hypothesis of Révész.

We must duly allow for the fact that, in terms of pure theory, the region of ordinary, commonplace happenings to which neither magic nor religion belongs, may very well have served as the general background of the characteristically human drama of language formation. In so far as we refuse to give our full assent to the theory advanced by Lévy-Bruhl that primitive man is completely immersed in a prelogical superstitious frame of mind, and has therefore no 'physical' world in our sense, in so far as we acknowledge, instead, the duality of the Sacred and the Profane as an empirical fact among all primitive peoples, we are not, it would seem, justified in attributing the creation of linguistic symbols exclusively to only one of these two equally important domains of savage life.

Now it would be vanity for anyone to think of being able to remove all these critical misgivings—and very serious ones at that—with one stroke and in a completely satisfactory way. And yet, on the other hand, it will not be impossible to suggest at least some lines of solution. It will be noticed, to begin with, that the facts of spontaneous ritual do not belong in an exclusive way to either of the two domains as distinguished here, but stand somehow outside this theoretical duality of primitive life; or rather, they hang as it were double-faced in mid-air between the two, partaking of the nature of both the Sacred and the Profane. And this hovering middle position between opposite extremes appears to make them move back and forth between the two perspectives. On the one hand, spontaneous magic, as natural responses of man to overwhelming emotion or excessive desire, is undoubtedly an integral part of his ordinary life, but it implies, on the other hand, the occurrence of some strange gaps and breaches in the practical routine of his everyday affairs; it signifies, in other words, the intrusion of the extraordinary and magical into the middle of the scenes of daily life. Remaining within the limits of the ordinary practical relations of life, spontaneous ritual belongs nonetheless to the domain of magic; this is clear from the above-mentioned fact that it constitutes the real prototype of all standardized forms of magic and ritual. Thus we see that the hypothesis of the magical origin of language does not involve the assumption—which is absurd—that the primitive must be perpetually spook-haunted, nor does it necessarily imply that man could not have created language without stepping out of his daily life and entering into the specifically sacred domain of magic or religion.

Another important point may be noticed. It will be plain from what has preceded that spontaneous ritual, if viewed from the angle of daily life, is nothing more than a symptom of a very high tension induced by some strong emotion in

the psycho-physiological organism of man. The tension once induced, it takes hold of man from inside as a mental and physiological obsession, and does not relax its grip until it spends itself in a outburst of emotion in words and acts. Thus it can now be seen that a strong emotional experience always tends to supply a very favourable situation for a more or less frenzied overflow of words or sounds. And such, presumably, must have been also the case with our distant forefathers just below the level of speech, who, as yet lacking a full-fledged articulate language, could nevertheless communicate no doubt by means of a variety of 'signs', nay, who were most probably already a 'chattering' race with the babbling instinct and the natural interest in the phonetic material which characterize so significantly the earliest period of child language. (cf. J. Piaget, *The Language and Thought of the Child*, Eng. tr. Chap. I, the section on 'echolalia'). We may remark in addition that the high emotional tension usually contributes greatly towards enhancing the gravity or solemnity of the voice uttered, which is evidently the first and necessary condition for the development of the basal association between the sound and the object.

As to the stimulative influence of overflowing emotion or desire on the spontaneous verbiage of man, we may note that some approximation to it is often found even in animals. The vocal behaviour in birds provides an instance in point. It will be remembered that the bird with its very conspicuous natural interest in random sounds of the surroundings, its imitative impulse, and its vocalizing instinct, is as a species a characteristically singing creature, unique in this respect in the whole animal kingdom and rightly comparable to man in his early childhood. So let me bring this lengthy chapter to a close with a few remarks on the voice-play of birds, in so far as it will offer an important side-light upon my immediate theme. The following account is based on an interesting observation made to me in a personal communication by a young ornithologist-linguist, Takao Suzuki, to whom I take this opportunity of acknowledging my indebtedness.

As a first approximation we may divide the 'speech' of birds into two classes: (1) call-notes—the everyday language, so to speak, of birds, which they employ all through the year for ordinary communicative purposes, and which, thus, corresponds, broadly speaking, to the pre-linguistic usage of sound-signs among human beings to which reference has been earlier made; and (2) 'songs' in a narrow sense, which seem to obey certain canons of emotional reaction, inasmuch as they are closely associated with various states of inner effervescence of birds. Of these two it is clearly the latter kind of vocal activity that will have a direct bearing on our main problem; this is therefore deserving of a brief description.

According to T. Kawamura (of Kyōto University) who is of unsurpassed authority on the subject in Japan, three types are to be distinguished among bird songs: *viz.* (1) territory song, (2) love song, and (3) joy song. The first two are

sometimes lumped together under the more general appellation of 'spring song' and in fact they are not always easily distinguishable from each other even in one and the same species. (Tamiji Kawamura 川村多実二, *Tori-no Uta-no Kagaku* 鳥の歌の科学 'Science of Bird Song'.) Joy song—or ecstasy song, as Kawamura sometimes calls it—is a very peculiar type of song which is sung in an exceedingly animated manner when birds are apparently in a state of agreeable excitement. As is well known, birds are extremely sensitive to the conditions in the external environment. When the weather is, for example, bad, they remain silent and retiring, but with the least suggestion of fine weather, they at once become hilarious and buoyant, and break out into sprightly song as if seized with an irresistible desire to give vent to the inner surge of joy. One might say that the suddenly heightened physiological tension must at any cost spend itself in a melodious flow of vocal sounds. This type of song is sung by birds irrespective of age, sex, and season.

Still more interesting and greater of significance for our thesis is the 'spring song' comprising both territory and love song. Whereas joy song is heard in all seasons, this type of vocal activity is tied down to a particular season, the spring. Now it is a commonplace to say that birds begin to sing with the advent of spring. And the physiological explanation of the fact is also ready to hand. With the coming of spring the increasing daylight goes on stimulating the pituitary gland located under the eye and this gradually induces an adequate secretion of hormones in the blood, which is most immediately responsible for the arousal of the sex drive. It will be remarked that, in birds as well as in the higher animals, the period of sexual need is also a period of increased general activity. Sexual drive, it seems, not only gives rise to specific activity towards the satisfaction of the desire, but also stimulates the organism to an increase of bodily activity in general. In the particular case of birds this causes a remarkable vivification of vocal behaviour, making the sexual cycle coincide exactly with the singing cycle.

Thus in the Temperate Zone, where birds generally mate and breed in the spring, we hear them sing rapturous songs from spring to summer; thence the name of 'spring'-song under which this type of their vocal activity is usually known. It is extremely interesting to note in this connection that the domesticated fowl and canary that have no particular sexual cycle have no seasonal cycle for singing either. This abolition of the sexual cycle, or better still, the extension of it to the whole year seems to have caused here the extension of the singing (or crowing) activity to all seasons.

Besides these more or less formalized seasonal songs, another type of singing is often observable during the sexual period, which is of a more intimate nature, being more closely associated with the act of mating itself. Indeed, it is not uncommon among songsters that a peculiar kind of singing forms an integral part

of the pre-coital display usually performed by the male for the purpose of arousing in the female the specific desire for the sexual act. A number of very remarkable cases have been recorded by Len Howard, whose book *Birds as Individuals* is a real mine of information on this and many other subjects concerning the life-habits of birds. Here is a passage, for example, in which she describes the frenzied love-making of a blackbird. Once she heard, she tells us, a very strange song, of an entirely uncommon type, of a blackbird. A hoarse jumbled medley of song, it struck her at first as if coming from some bird going through some kind of torture. She hurried to the spot with ideas of saving it from disaster; she found that 'it was the passionate love-song of a Blackbird in the last throes of wooing a provocative female, who led him a chase, round and round in small circles.... He was more and more excited as the chase grew faster; his neck was stretched out, head-feathers were ruffled, eyes glittering and beak opened to let fling this volley of explosive-sounding song.' (p. 188)

This vivid picture of the pre-coital mad dance and voice-play of a black-bird would naturally remind us of all that was said above about 'spontaneous ritual' of primitive man. And in fact, the vocal behaviour of this type together with such other display acts as spreading wings and tail, hopping and leaping, bowing and strutting around, etc., are often referred to by ornithologists as 'ritual' of birds.

Let there be no mistake about it, however. We are not in any way suggesting that these seemingly ritualistic acts are a monopoly of birds. For such interplays between male and female before copulation are observed even among fishes and butterflies. The careful examination of the Grayling (*eumenis semele*) done by N. Tinbergen, for example, has revealed the fact that this butterfly performs a series of pre-coital displays among which are counted a graceful bow and embracing female's antennae by male's forewings (*Social Behaviour in Animals*, Chap. I). The point I should like to make is that, in the case of birds, the use of vocal music usually forms an indispensable component of this kind of 'ritual', playing as it does an essential role for stimulating the partner and eliciting his or her response.

We may profitably recall at this juncture what was pointed out a few paragraphs earlier as the most distinctive feature of birds in general; namely, that they are vocalizing animals with a marked instinctive tendency to produce sounds. Indeed, birds and human beings seem to be the only races in the whole animal kingdom with the tendency to constant production of sounds, though in the former this inborn capacity for language has—for reasons upon which it is not necessary to speculate now—failed to evoke verbal symbolism in the proper sense of the word. For our present inquiry, the central point to emphasize is this, that, in both of these vocalizing races, spontaneous verbiage appears to open up an escape from situations of emotional stress; that the voice, speaking more generally, tends to undergo an inner transformation under the influence of desire and emotion, and

to assume a deep symbolic significance. Perhaps this will give us a hint as to the vital importance of the situational contexts of spontaneous ritual for the genesis of human language.

It is still common talk among philologists and linguists that Otto Jespersen, seeking to follow language back to its earliest beginning, has at last come to the conclusion that it was born probably in the courting days of mankind as 'something between the nightly love-lyrics of puss upon the tiles and the melodious love-songs of the nightingale'. (*Language*, Chap. XXI, 12). Viewed in the light of the foregoing discussion, this supposition would appear not so alarming and fantastic as it looks at first sight.

## Chapter X

## LANGUAGE IN A MAGIC CIRCLE

Throughout the preceding chapters there has run the thought that the linguistic behaviour of man is, as a whole and in the last analysis, something essentially magical. It has been assumed that of all the distinguishable functions of human language, the magical function is the most primitive; that it is, genetically speaking, more fundamental and more important than all the others, these—whatever they may be—being regarded, on such an interpretation, as altogether secondary and derivative. Arguing along these lines, I have tried to show that even those speech functions (e. g. the designative - informative use of words) which, as far as their present status goes, have decidedly no association at all with magic and ritual, may in a certain sense be considered as enfeebled, sporadic traces of the more primitive, magical usage. To speak in terms of the fundamental duality of primitive life, the domain of the Sacred and the domain of the Profane, to which repeated reference has been made, it is from the standpoint of the former that I have consistently tried to examine the facts of language.

In order to do full justice to realities, however, we must reverse the direction and look at the matter also from the viewpoint of the opposite side, the domain of the Profane. Now hardly have we changed our perspective in that way than it becomes clear that most of our words disclose no such miraculous efficacy as is generally supposed to reside in them at the true Animistic stage. The veil of mystery suddenly withdrawn, language reveals itself as too meagre and too commonplace an instrument to work wonders with.

As we have seen, language, according to the mythical type of thinking, is in itself sacred; every word pronounced takes effect immediately as magic by the mere fact of its having been uttered. Such, however, is not actually the case with language as we know it in the real world. In all societies both civilized and savage, wherever there is a more or less rigorous observance of the distinction between the domain of the Sacred and the domain of the Profane, language, as an actual social fact, belongs rather to the latter than to the former. To put the matter in a somewhat different way, it is 'ordinary language' that forms everywhere the substructure of all linguistic culture. But is this not after all tantamount to saying that our words do not (or rather, have ceased to) reveal as a rule any magical efficacy?

Might we say that language, through long use, has completely lost whatever

magical power it may have originally possessed? At all events, this at least appears to be certain: most of our words have struck root so deeply in the soil of the ordinary relations of life, they are so enmeshed with all manner of irrelevancies of everyday existence that they require more extraordinary conditions if they are to change at all their character and begin to operate magically. Excepting a small number of special words not permitted for profane purpose, ordinary language is in need of a preliminary process of consecration in order that it might subserve magical function. It must, for that purpose, be isolated beforehand from the immediate practical life interests, ceremoniously purified, heightened and transformed into something entirely different in nature and purport from what it is in the domain of the Profane. Thus among all races and in all ages, the heightening of language, or the shifting of speech level from the 'normal' to the 'sacred', is known to be a necessary prerequisite to all magical use of words. This I should like to call the process of magical 'framing' of language.

As a matter of fact, the 'framing' can occur in a well-nigh innumerable variety of ways, which, however, may conveniently be brought under two heads: (1) outer and (2) inner 'framing'. I begin with the first category. The devices for the outer 'framing' of language are best represented by those specifically ritualistic situations so frequently met with in primitive society, such as annual or seasonal festivities with a big concourse of people, or magico-religious ceremonies of a more private nature held on various solemn occasions in man's life as birth, entering adult life, marriage, sickness and death. As is easy to see, these situations are completely set at a distance from common life and everyday thought. Amid the emotional ebullition presiding over the whole process, everything is naturally made impressive, strong and grandiose. The whole life becomes modified and heightened. Nothing remains normal, ordinary, and commonplace. It will be natural that, under such conditions, language also should become something extraordinary. Supported by intense emotional excitement animating all the participants, every single snippet of speech, otherwise insipid, assumes dignity and impressiveness. In such a context, speech as such is sacred, the act of utterance is, in itself, an act of releasing some magical power.

The phenomenon itself is so well known that there will be no need to give more than a few instances. Here are two or three random examples taken from the literature of ancient peoples. The first one is from the *Manyō-shū*, the oldest anthology of Japanese poetry to which reference was made in Chapter II. As we saw in some detail there, the world in which the Manyō man lived was a world of true Animism; it was a world peopled by all manner of gods and spirits, and characterized by the belief in the mysterious power of the word. To his mind, as to the animistic type of mind in general, naming was a magical evocation, and the very act of speech was, theoretically at least, something of magical purport. And yet on the other hand, even in such an age, ordinary language was considered too



base and 'unclean' to be employed for the purpose of communicating with gods and spirits or for various other magico-religious purposes. The following poem depicts vividly the special rites of purification being performed with the view of heightening the status of ordinary language and transforming it into something worthy to be used in a conversation with invisible powers. It is a work of a famous woman poet, Lady Sakanoue of Ōtomo, to be found in volume III of the Anthology (379).

Oh, my venerable God, / Who has descended from the Plain of Heaven!  
/ Here I am, with a branch of the sacred evergreen / Brought from the  
heart of the mountain; / White shreds of hemp with sacred fibre I have  
bound to it. / I have dug in a divine wine-jar with purifying rites; /  
Through numberless bamboo-rings I have run a cord / To hang it down  
over the jar; / Bending on my knees like a deer, / I, a maiden, dressed  
in my ceremonial gown, / Thus reverentially supplicate thee; / Would  
that I could meet my lord!

It is evident that the heart and core of the whole poem is contained in the final single line expressing the wish of the girl, all the preceding lines doing no more than describe the pomp of the ritual and the hardships of preparation. But these were necessary in order to exalt a simple optative sentence into an efficacious formula of love-magic. Moreover, we find exactly the same type of ritual procedure constantly referred to throughout the *Manyō-shū*, a fact which confirms the view that the poem mirrors faithfully the magical habits and ideas that were prevalent in those days. (See for example, VIII 420, 433, V 904, IX 1790, XIII 3284, etc., etc.)

Parallels are found in plenty not only in ancient literature but in any ethnographical records of religious practices of uncivilized people. As to the concrete ritual procedure to be taken there is of course an endless diversity, but that is entirely irrelevant so long as the main objective of the rites—that of creating an atmosphere peculiarly cogent to the heightening of language—is attained by means of them. In the well-known case of the Syrian prophet Balaam in the Old Testament, for instance, the act of sacrificing on seven altars one bullock and one ram each serves the purpose of producing the extraordinary conditions in which to receive divine words. (*Num.* 23, 1–3). The ritual may easily be expanded to the solemn grandeur of an elaborate ceremony, but it may also, taking an opposite course, be reduced to some simple gesture having a symbolic value. Nor are the actual words used and the grammatical forms they assume a matter of central importance provided that the efficacy of the outer 'framing' does not happen to be impaired. For on such formal occasions definitely marked off from those of the profane world, the situation itself becomes somehow suffused with magical

animation, and becomes, consequently, capable of bestowing on every word (or indeed on every syllable) uttered a mysterious, magical emphasis. The effect, needless to say, is greatly enhanced if inner 'framing' is made to work concurrently, if in other terms, such special forms of expression are deliberately employed as would be particularly suitable to the solemnity of the occasion. And in fact, magical formulas are, in a very great majority of cases, couched in forms apart from those of ordinary use. But, at least in theory, a well-ordered and carefully prepared ritual setting can, in its own right, induce an inner transformation of ordinary language as a whole in the direction indicated above. We must remember that, in such magical contexts of situation, words are supposed to take effect as soon as uttered. A name pronounced immediately conjures up the invisible, intangible spirit of the thing designated by the name; hence the magical practice of summoning by name, which is one of the most prominent and persistent features of sorcery and prayer. But of this much has been said earlier in passages more than one. It is to be remarked further that, in all such situations of magical animation, even language in its descriptive function rarely behaves as pure statement of fact, for the magical atmosphere of volition presiding over the whole process may in most cases be efficacious enough to change any description instantly into an expressed wish or command. To describe an occurrence means here to *will* that occurrence. Accordingly, to depict in words some future event is to determine beforehand the future course of events, as is well exemplified by the so-called agricultural magic in which the growing of plants is depicted in minute details.

We are now in a position to understand the reason why it happens so often that narrative poetry and prose are recited during great festivals. The Babylonian *Epic of Creation*, for example, the recitation of which formed an important part of the New Year ritual, appears to have been originally composed for magical purposes (cf. C. J. Gadd, *Babylonian Myth and Ritual* in S. H. Hook's *Myth and Ritual*). As an interesting parallel case we may cite a festal ode from 'Minor Odes' of *Shih Ching* 詩經, entitled *Hsin Nan Shan* 信南山. It begins by narrating how the Sacred King Yü, opening up the country for cultivation, instituted for the people the method of agriculture; then it depicts the details of the agricultural labours, and finally goes on to a description of the ceremonies of sacrifice to ancestors.

- (1) Verily that Southern Mountain, / Yü himself wrought order in the region. / Cultivating its plains and swamps, / His descendants made it into fields. / We define its boundaries, we put it in order, / And make the channels run in all directions.
- (2) The heavens above are clouded all over, / Snow is falling in flakes; / Then follows the drizzling rain of spring. / The ground has received plenty of the rain, / It has become moistened to the full. / It pro-

- duces for us hundred kinds of grain.
- (3) The larger and smaller divisions are now in good order. / The millet is luxuriant and abundant; / It is the result of the labours of the descendants. / We will make therewith spirits and food, / and present to our 'defunct' and our guests. / Long life of myriads of years!
- (4) In the middle of the fields huts are erected. / In the larger and smaller divisions there are gourds; / They are sliced and pickled, / And offered to the spirits of our ancestors. / Their descendants will have long life, / And receive the heavenly blessing.
- (5) The ceremony is commenced with libation of pure drink, / Followed by the sacrifice of a red bull, / These are reverentially offered to the ancestors. / (The king himself) takes the knife adorned with small bells, / With which he lays bare the hair of the bull, / And takes its blood and fat.
- (6) Reverentially we present, reverentially we offer. / With the fragrance (of the burned fat) the air is heavy. / The performance of the ceremony is thus very brilliant. / The ancestors are grandly seated there. / They will reward us with happiness. / Life of myriads of years, without end!

There can be little doubt that the recital of such an ode was believed to have a beneficial influence on the new crops of the year. It is to be further observed that in an 'isolating' language such as ancient Chinese, characterized by monosyllabism and the absence of inflectional endings, the role of outer 'framing' must be on the whole much more important than in inflectional languages where the distinction between simple narration and volitional utterance is, as a rule, morphologically indicated by the inflections of the verb. In the almost complete absence of such formal criteria, as in ancient Chinese, it happens very often that we are left uncertain as to whether a given sentence must be rendered in the indicative or the desiderative, if we are not to gather it from the concrete situation in which it was uttered. The fact is that, so far as the purely linguistic aspect of the matter is concerned, there is no distinction at all between the two kinds of expression; or we might perhaps rather say that the string of sentences, in such cases, is double-faced, simple narrative functioning at one and the same time as a direct expression of the speaker's will. See for example the following passage taken from the same *Shih Ching* (*Hsiao Ya*, *T'ien Pao* 天保). These are the first three stanzas of an ode which was sung in all probability by the 'guests' of the king at festal entertainments in the royal court, celebrating his praises and wishing for him long-during happiness. The ode, it will be remarked, does no more than describe in simple style a certain state of prosperity, but here each descriptive sentence as it falls instantly passes into a prayer.

- (1) 天保定爾 Heaven keeps thee and establishes thee,  
亦孔之固 And makes it very secure,  
俾爾單厚 It causes thee to be wholly virtuous,  
何福不除 What happiness is not renewed?  
俾爾多益 (Heaven) causes thee to increase in happiness,  
以莫不庶 So everything is in abundance.
- (2) 天保定爾 Heaven keeps thee and establishes thee,  
俾爾戩穀 It causes thee to be entirely happy,  
罄無不宜 And there is nothing which is not excellent.  
受天百祿 Thou receivest hundred favours of Heaven.  
降爾遐福 It hastens to send down to thee everlasting happiness  
維日不足 (As if) it had not one single day to waste.
- (3) 天保定爾 Heaven keeps thee and establishes thee,  
以莫不興 So everything prospers with thee.  
如山如阜 Like mountains, like high lands  
如岡如陵 Like hills, like steep peaks,  
如川之方至 Like rivers ever increasing,  
以莫不增 Everything goes on multiplying.

Failing such contextual help, it often becomes difficult to choose between two possible interpretations, the indicative and the optative. As an illuminating example we may take a little poem entitled *Chiu Mu* 樛木 to be found in *Kuo Feng* (*Chou Nan*, *Shih Ching*), consisting of three short stanzas of four lines each. Here is the first stanza:

南有樛木 (south. have. drooping. tree)  
葛藟荒之 (ivy. vine. cling. that)  
樂只君子 (rejoice. indeed. prince. son)  
福履綏之 (bliss. happiness. repose. that)

The first and the second verses are obviously descriptive; they may be translated: 'In the south there are trees with drooping boughs, / Various creepers are clinging to them.' But concerning the interpretation of the last two lines—which, besides, are repeated in only slightly different form in the two remaining stanzas—there has been considerable diversity of opinion among the leading authorities in Chinese philology. According to a school of the old commentators, for instance, these verses are to be understood as a description of the high virtue of the Lady T'ai Ssu, the mistress of king Wen's harem (cf. *Chêng Hsüan*, *Mao Chuan Chêng Chien*). Another school, on the contrary, tries to interpret them as a good wish for the same queen. Leaving out of consideration all historical allusions of this kind—which are in fact entirely irrelevant from the standpoint of the

modern critical exegesis—we may reasonably interpret them in a much simpler way as words invoking a blessing on the ‘princely person’ mentioned in the third line, whoever he may be: ‘O how happy our lord is! May happiness and blissfulness give repose to him!’ At all events, it is easy to see that such difference of opinion is due to the lack of an exact information as to the circumstances under which, and the real purpose for which, the ode was originally composed.

So much for the heightening of language effected on a grand scale, with all due ceremony, so to speak. It will be well to remember that such openly magico-religious contexts of situation as seasonal festivities, pompous ceremonies and the like, are certainly the most important but not in any way the sole means of outer ‘framing’. For, as one would expect, there are many other ready-made devices of a much simpler style for attaining the same ends. As hinted above, the ritual may, in some cases, be reduced to the merest performance of some very simple symbolic act, such as pointing with the finger, putting one’s hand on something sacred, sitting up straight, looking serious, and so on. As everybody knows this occurs very often in more or less conventionalized forms of oathtaking. Take for example the very curious standing formula of an oath of affirmation in Hebrew: “Kōh ya’aseh Yahweh li w’khōh yosiph ki ……” (lit. ‘So may God do to me and so may He do it again if ……’) to be found in the books of *Samuel*, *Kings* and *Ruth* in the Old Testament. The demonstrative word ‘so’ clearly refers to some symbolic gesture accompanying the utterance. The formula thus takes us back to a remoter age when man used to take oath over the pieces of the sacrifice, the whole ceremony being now symbolically represented by a simple form of mimicry.

In Chinese, “chih t’ien shih jih” 指天誓日 (‘to point one’s finger towards the heavens and swear by the sun’) is a set phrase meaning to plight one’s faith. This custom of pointing to the sun in swearing can be traced back to remote antiquity in China.

指九天以為正兮 Chih chiu t’ien i wei chêng hsi  
夫唯靈脩之故也 Fu wei ling hsiu chih ku yeh.

(Ch’u Tz’ü, Li Sao. 楚辭, 離騷)

(I point to the ninefold Heaven and make it my witness!  
Surely all this I do only for the sake of the wise, beautifully  
adorned one (i. e. my lord))

謂予不信 Wei yü pu hsin  
有如皞日 Yu ju chiao ju

(Shih Ching, Wang, Ta Ch’ê 詩經, 王, 大車.)

(If [you] say I am not sincere,  
By that bright sun [I swear I am])

It is to be remarked, furthermore, that this represents the commonest type of

reduced ritual of oathtaking to be seen among the most varied races over the world. Thus it will be seen that in such cases the act of calling to witness something sacred, accompanied by the pointing gesture, is generally deemed sufficient to bring about a magical atmosphere, in which the heightening of language occurs almost of its own accord.

Nay more, the process here described of the gradual reduction of ritual to ever more simplified forms may lead even to the nullification of all outward ceremonies. Thus among primitive peoples at all stages of Animism, the magical ‘framing’ of language is usually believed to be effected by the mental act of willing it, or speaking in terms of primitive psychology, by the mere projection of the Soul-power on the external environment. This is particularly the case with persons endowed with extraordinary spiritual power, such as magicians, sorcerers, or prophets. It is common knowledge among anthropologists that in the later stages of Magic, a mere wish or volition is very often held to be magically efficacious even without any intervention of ceremonies or rites. When a man of strong Soul has described in words, for example, some future event and has really willed it into the bargain, the event described and desired is *ipso facto* bound to realize itself sooner or later.

Such is, to give but one example out of a number, the volitive force of the future in the “Brahmaçapa”, i. e. a Brahman-imprecation which inflicts a fatal wound on Daçaratha in *Rāmāyana* (II, 44, l. 55 ff). The terrible curse was, on the face of it, nothing more than a simple description in the future tense of a miserable death: Because my innocent son has been killed by thee so imprudently, I also will imprecate evil upon thee. As I must lose my life-breath now, overwhelmed with grief at the loss of my beloved son, so thou shalt, likewise, lose thy life-breath desiring in vain to see thy son. It is obvious that, in such a case, the invisible act of projecting the will-power constitutes the whole ritual as a necessary prerequisite to the releasing of the magical virtue inherent in the word. Thus in primitive thought, a strong Soul is at liberty to perform whenever and wherever it likes a sort of *ad hoc* magical ceremony by which to mark off at will a given piece of speech from its ordinary context.

But these are, it might be said, after all superstitious ideas peculiar to the age of animism, and have, therefore, little or nothing to do with civilized populations. This is of course largely true. But it should not be taken in the sense that we moderns no longer possess any means of outer ‘framing’ of language. No; for, we must not forget, there is the vast domain of spontaneous magic of emotional expression. Even the kind of wish-magic which I have just described in the preceding paragraph as representing the utmost limit of reduction of magical ritual, might be regarded in a certain sense as already belonging to this domain. For it must be admitted that the ‘strong Soul’ as understood there is after all a relative notion; in other terms, it is not by any means a monopoly of certain privileged

persons, such as great Brahmans, professional magicians, prophets, and the like; practically everyone can, under certain specific circumstances, become (at least temporarily) a strong Soul. In the particular case of the future tense, this is but another way of saying that it begins to behave voluntarily as soon as the speaker under emotional stress wills it to behave in that way. We shall note that in many languages—even in those which possess well-established voluntative 'moods' such as subjunctive and optative—the future is commonly used in expressions of wish, prohibitions, threats, promises, asseverations, etc. It may be added that Adelaide Hahn, who has carried out an extensive inquiry into the origin of the subjunctive and the optative in the Indo-European languages, has come to the conclusion that not only are the two moods used similarly and sometimes interchangeably but they were in origin pure futures (*Subjunctive and Optative*, Chap. VI, VII).

We should recall at this juncture all that was said about spontaneous ritual of emotion in the foregoing chapter. It will be easy to see that, viewed from the standpoint of the present chapter, spontaneous magic will prove to be a real source of very powerful devices for effecting the shifting of language level here spoken of. Put in modern colourless phraseology, this will only amount to saying that the state of intense emotional excitement tends to induce a heightening of language. I have earlier tried to show (Chap. IV) how in situations of emotional tension and stress the apparently meagre language of everyday life suddenly changes its character and begins to exert a mighty influence over the minds and actions of men. All manner of non-verbal accompaniments, such as manual gesture, facial expression, voice-modulation, forms of mimicry, etc., are utilized and even deliberately exploited for the purpose of evoking certain feelings on the part of the auditor, or causing him to act in the desired fashion. All these modes of non-verbal behaviour which usually accompany the emotive use of language may primarily be no more than spontaneous, natural expressions of emotion, but, from the viewpoint of the hearer, they function at the same time as external devices for making words behave in a magical way.

But we see now that if this is what distinguishes the emotive use of language, then not only this or that particular piece of speech but verbal language in general as opposed to written language, all speech, that is, which is actually spoken in real life, must, from the broadest point of view, be recognized as essentially emotive in nature, and, therefore, as already magically 'framed'—though of course in very many varying degrees from the highest to the least. For, as used in warm-blooded live situations in the real world, all linguistic symbols tend to assume readily and naturally at least a modicum of emotional expressiveness, and in fact they are accompanied almost always by supplementary behaviour of the type discussed above. Thus the difference between 'ordinary' and 'heightened' language, paradoxical though it may sound on first hearing, will be reduced to a mere matter of degree. What is generally conceived of as 'ordi-

nary' language—if indeed the conception has not resulted from giving exclusive attention to the written type of language—is, on this interpretation, nothing but those portions of speech which are completely mechanized, and whose magical 'framing' has, through mechanization, been weakened to an almost imperceptible faintness. However, the topic of the influence exerted by situations of high emotional tension on the status of language has received our attentive consideration throughout the volume, and further detailed discussion would only be an useless repetition. Besides, we shall have to come back to the problem once again in dealing with the second of the means of consecrating linguistic symbols: the *inner framing* of language.

By internal devices for heightening language I understand primarily those various kinds of inner transformation which linguistic symbols usually have to undergo in order to assume ceremonial dignity. So far the outer 'framing' has been described as being able to induce a magical atmosphere strong enough to make any piece of speech behave in a supernormal way quite independently of a formal change on the part of the words used. This, as already remarked, is theoretically possible. Yet, in practice, the outer 'framing' cannot fulfill its office satisfactorily without the concurrence of another kind of 'framing' which affects the inner structure of language itself. As a matter of fact, outer and inner processes of 'framing' tend to go hand in hand. It is most natural that extraordinary emotions should demand an extraordinary language for their adequate expression. In a litany, for example, no one will fail to notice that commonplace words and phrases are ridiculously out of tune; in such a case, special forms of expression must be chosen with deliberate design which would command respect and would be particularly suited to the solemnity of the occasion. That is why, when dealing with the problem of outer 'framing', we had to encroach more than once upon the realm of inner 'framing'. It will be recalled that most of the examples cited in the foregoing sections have been in verse-form.



## Chapter XI

## THE HEIGHTENED LANGUAGE

Examined in the light of the foregoing discussion, the problem of the inner 'framing' of language will be found to lead perforce to a re-examination of all verbal language. Space will permit, however, only a cursory study of some of the most characteristic devices that have been developed for the specific purpose of producing a heightened language.

It will be clear from what has preceded that the use of 'emotive' terms constitutes, from our specific point of view, an indubitable case of inner 'framing' of language. With most of us it is almost the only device in hand for heightening at will any words and phrases we like. Since, in order to realize a desired end, we must make above all a *moving* appeal, we are constantly forced to introduce into our ordinary conversation, unconsciously or by design, particular words with high emotional tension. It is, indeed, not too much to say that without this kind of inner 'framing' language could not have its normal function.

We should remember, on the other hand, that even 'neutral' terms, when delivered in an appropriate tone of voice, may very well have the same effect as 'emotive' terms. As I have noted above more than once, there is practically no word that may not be made to behave magically by a louder or more emotionally modulated pronunciation. It is a matter of common experience that, on the lips of a practised propagandist, even routine words change their status and begin to exercise the strongest emotional appeal over the audience. This is more often than not due to a skillful use of *emphasis*. That rhetorical emphasis and magic are closely allied to each other has been already pointed out in an earlier context. If, in talking with others, we raise our voice, dwell with emphasis upon some word or group of words while scurrying over others, this alone will be enough to give prominence to the former; and the word or group of words thus made prominent becoming in a manner of speaking the pivot upon which all the others turn, the whole sentence will end in carrying a markedly emotional tinge. A sentence 'framed' as a whole in this way, may further, under appropriate circumstances, subserve the function of arousing emotional reactions on the part of the hearer.

The magical implication of this phenomenon will be clearly perceived if we place it against the background of more primitive ideas and customs. Under primitive conditions of life, verbal emphasis is admittedly one of the handiest tech-

niques by which to release the magical virtue contained in the word. Without going the length of performing toilsome rites, man can, by means of this simple informal device, enclose any verbal sequence with a magical circle offhand and with ease. All that is required of him is to pronounce the word or phrase to be made particularly obtrusive and effective in a certain tone of voice and with a certain degree of emphasis, or to remove it simply from its regular place in the sentence, or again to attach an emphasizing, asseverative particle to it.

We have already seen in Chapter IV that an emphatic affirmation does very often verge on a ceremonial asseveration. Take for example the following short sentence from *Ch'u Tz'u* 楚辭, 離騷 armed with no less than three emphasizing particles: "*Kou jü ch'ing ch'i hsin fang*" 苟余情其信芳 (lit. 'Verily my sentiment, that!, [is] in truth honourable!') this is already a genuine oath. In classical Arabic a particular form of the verb generally known as 'energetic' mood—formed by adding the characteristically strong syllable "anna" etc., to the indicative—was in use in solemn statements, oaths, commands and wishes, particularly in conjunction with the emphatic particle "la": e. g. "*La aqtulanna*" lit. 'Verily I will surely kill!'

As regards the relationship of verbal emphasis with volition it will be interesting to note that in such languages as Sumerian and Accadian, the most ordinary emphatic particle—"he-", "ha-", or "hu-" in the former, "lu" in the latter—coincides with the commonest particle of volition. The following example from Sumerian shows this double use of the same particle (or prefix) in a single passage:

"e-a-ni.....*hu*-mu-na-du (emphatic) lit. Her-house. I-built-her,  
ki-bi *he*-im-mi-gi..... ( " ) Its-place. I restored  
gal-li-esh *he*-im-mi-dur... ( " ) Mightily. I-made-[her]-dwell.  
...nin-mu *hu*-mu-hul-li-en (optative) O my-lady, mayst-thou-rejoice!  
...ud-mu *he*-sud-ud" ( " ) My-days, may-they-be-long!  
—Cuneiform Texts, B. M. Vol. I—

In Accadian, likewise, "likshud" (lū ikshud) may mean both 'surely he captured (perfect-preterite)' and 'let him capture! (optative-imperative)'. G. R. Driver finds it impossible to conceive any semantic transition whereby the preterite "ikshud" ('he captured') can have come to mean also 'let him capture' or *vice versa* (cf. his *Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System*, p. 32). In the light of the preceding discussion, however, there is nothing disturbing in this phenomenon. It will be well to remember that in the Semitic languages in general, the perfect-preterite is constantly used in wishes, requests, oaths, curses and blessings as well as in the language of contracts, buying and selling; it represents any act or event which one hopes may be done or may happen as having already taken place.

In exactly the same way, in Ancient Chinese we see the commonest particle of

emphasis "ye" 也 frequently employed in the optative-imperative sense. It will be noteworthy to point out here that the grammarian Yang Po Chün 楊伯峻 has rightly seen the close semantic affinity between the two sorts of signification; in his *Wên Yen Yü Fa* 文言語法 (*A Grammar of Classical Chinese*, 1955, § 11, 18) he maintains that, since the word "ye" gives emphasis to any word or sentence it is but natural that it should also be much used in wishes, commands, and prohibitions.

This we may probably compare with the optative-imperative use of the (augmentless) past indicative in Vedic Sanscrit—the so-called injunctive—in commands and prohibitions. Adelaide Hahn in the above-cited book *Subjunctive and Optative* suggests that the use of the past is tied up with the matter of aspect. Since, in her opinion, a command, and still more a prohibition, is likely to have punctual rather than durative force, the use of the past 'tense'—which was originally not a tense at all but a punctual-perfective aspect—is particularly germane to the case. We must admit that this view is very probable, and that, further, the same will probably apply with equal force to the volitive use of the perfect-preterite so common in the Semitic languages. However, I venture to maintain that, at least in the case of the latter languages, the phenomenon will be best explained as a sort of anticipatory verbal representation of what man desires, the enactment through an act of mental evocation of the desired (but as yet unrealized) end. It is in this sense a particular kind of semantic emphasis. Now if this argumentation be sound, we might understand the use of the type *lu*-preterite in the optative as a representative case of double emphasis used as an expression of desire and will. To some this would appear to be a statement which needs elaborating. Since, however, the problem belongs to the very specified domain of Semitic philology, any further discussion will be out of place in the present study. So I shall simply bring this section to a close with a fine example showing the volitive-desiderative use of the form in question in a 'conditional curse'.

"Mu-ni-kir mu-sar-ai da-ai-i-ši a-ma-ti-ia	(The destroyer of my stela, who ignores my word,
.....	
Ashshur shar ialni u ilani rabūti sha shamē u iršitim	may Assur, king of the gods, and the great gods of heaven and earth
ar-rat [la] nap-shu-ri ma-ru-ush-ti li-ru-ru-shu-ma (<lū irurū)	curse him with an evil curse which cannot be removed; may
sharru-us-su lish-ki-pu (<lū ishkipū balāt-šu li-ki-mu-shu (<lū ikimū-shu)	They overthrow his kingship, deprive him of life and

shuma-shu zēra-shu.....	his name and his seed
ina nap-khar mātai li-khal-li-qu (<lū ukhalliqū)	in every land may they overthrow)

—The Annals of Sennecherib, *The Temple of the New Year's Feast*, ed. Luckenbill, VIII, II. 66—72—

As another important means of inner 'framing' of language we might mention the use of words of stilted obscurity. Now it is of common knowledge that, in all ages and all countries, magical texts are characteristically filled with all manner of difficult words and obscure expressions. Among primitive tribes, spells and litanies chanted at sacred ceremonies are very often mere gibberish, or at most consist of a multitude of incomprehensible words never to be used in ordinary life. There can be no doubt that these contribute towards enhancing the solemnity of the language and making it sound more mysterious and impressive. For the specific purpose of carrying the obscurity of expression to its utmost limits, all sorts of archaisms and even mere galimatias are made use of; strange names are invented or, as the need arises, freely borrowed from foreign tongues. Only one example may be cited here from a collection of Egyptian magical papyri. It is a very curious spell to be uttered over a dog-bite: 'The spell of Amon and Triphis thus: ..... *Shamāla, Malet*, / The mysterious one who has reached the most mysterious one, / *Greshei*, The lord of *Rent*, *Tahne*, *Bahne*. / This dog, this black one, / The dog, the mysterious one, / .....Relax thy tooth / Stop thy spittle! / .....Listen to this speech, / Horus, who healed burning, / Who went to the abyss, / Who founded the earth; Listen, O *Yaho-Sabaho*, / *Abjaho* by name!' We shall note that in the last line but one, the God of the Israelites in His characteristically Biblical form 'Jehovah of Hosts' ("Yahweh Šēbhāōth") is expressly invoked, and that, moreover, in the closing line the same God is called, again in Hebrew, *Abiaho*, i. e. 'Father (ab) of Yahweh (iaho)', which is a very strange name indeed. (From *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden*, ed. and trans. by Griffith and Thompson, 1904, Plate XIX)

It is but natural that spells and formulae couched in a strangely mysterious language, or in one whose meaning has entirely lost, should tend to produce the impression of being more efficacious than those consisting of ordinary intelligible words. Thus in Babylonia and Assyria, where the Sumerian language was no longer understood by the common people, it enjoyed an immense prestige as a sacred language endowed with same hidden virtue. The liturgy and the penitential psalms which played such an important role in the life of the Accadians, were always said in Sumerian, and could be efficacious only in that language. Such is also the case even in our own days with Sanscrit and Pali used in Buddhist services. This tendency may, as is extremely often the case with professional magi-

cians and sorcerers, be sharpened into the strange creed that the more incomprehensible an expression is, the more powerful it must be. Pico de Mirandola once remarked: a word devoid of all sensible meaning has most influence over the demons. As a matter of fact, the magical use of totally unintelligible syllables does occur frequently in the language of poetry. In the cultic and lyrical songs of primitive tribes, rhythmic singing often seems to go on independently of the meanings of the words. Let us now take the matter in detail.

Poetry is doubtless the most primitive and by far the most universal of all the known artifices of inner magical 'framing' of language. From time immemorial it has everywhere been the magical language *par excellence*. We have noted in an earlier chapter how, in the ancient world, the poet, magician, sorcerer, and prophet were originally represented by one and the same person. Among the peoples of antiquity—and the same applies equally to the backward populations of the present-day world—poetry was not a mere particular *genre* of literature, an adornment of life; it was a real, living, magical power. Indeed, it belongs to the *Urerlebnis* of man that even those words which otherwise sound quite thin and flat, often gain an astonishing sonority and impressiveness when put in metrical or rhythmic form, and become definitely removed from the realm of daily life. So striking is this experience to the primitive type of mind that poetry is not seldom believed to possess the supernatural power to sway even the natural course of events. The famous line of Virgil was cited earlier. Here is another illuminating example. In the now lost *Book of Heroes* ("Sēper Hayyāshār"), we are told, there was a poem preserved from the earliest days of Israelite history, a song sung by Joshua *extempore* on the memorable day when he succeeded in routing his enemies at Gibeon. The Old Testament gives it in this form:

"Shemesh b'Ghibh'ōn dōm	O sun, stand still over Gibeon,
W'yārēah b'emeq Ayyalōn!"	(Stand) O moon, over the vale of Ajalon!

To this the author of the *Book of Joshua* adds: 'And in fact the sun stood still in the middle of the sky, and did not run on to set for a whole day'. (*Josh.* 10, 12-13)

Similarly, the writer of the remarkable 'Great Preface' 大序 to *Shih Ching* remarks: 'For the purpose of moving Heaven and Earth, and of affecting gods and spirits, nothing is more appropriate than poetry', thus attesting to the great antiquity of this kind of belief in the magical power of poetry in China.

It will be interesting to notice in this connection the tremendous importance attached to poetry in ancient warfare. Since, to the view of ancient people, war was always in the last analysis a sort of psychic contest, psychic weapons, i. e.

words uttered in verse-forms, were of far greater importance than stone and iron. Among them a piece of poetry could work at any time as a real, dangerous weapon, which was all the more to be feared because it was invisible and of a psychic nature, which, when launched against an enemy, was sure to penetrate to the inward parts of the victim, weaken and paralyse his life-energy, and finally cause defeat and death. It is no accident that the ancients often described the dangerous words of incantation as 'arrows' and 'spears'. A Psalmist complaining of the injuries done by such words says, 'I am living among lions who prey upon men; Their teeth are spears and arrows, their tongue is a sharp sword' (Ps. 57, 4). This should not be taken as an useless metaphorical exaggeration. How real and vivid this kind of feeling was in early man may be known, for example, from a curious primitive habit mentioned by Ibn Hishām in his *Biography of Mahomet* (*Sirah Rasūl Allah*, ed. Wüstenfeld, I, 641): 'It is said that when a curse is directed against a man, he should immediately throw himself down sideways in order that the arrow might miss the mark.' Mahomet, we are told, once remarked to his favourite poet Hassan ibn Thābit, 'Your poetry is much more dangerous to our enemies than arrows shot in the dark of night.' (*Musiṭṭaf* LXVI). And the *Atharva Veda*, to give one more telling example, describing the supernatural power released by the Brahmans' Word compares it to 'sharp arrows': 'Brahmans have sharp arrows and missiles, / The volley they hurl is not in vain / Pursuing with fervour and with fury / They cast him down from afar.' (*AV* 18, tr. Bloomfield).

There is much evidence to show that everywhere in the ancient world, poets played a great part in wartime. They alone could really disarm the enemies of their tribe by hitting right into their souls terrible curses and spells in metrical or rhythmic form. They alone could bring destruction and shame upon whomsoever they detested by the magical power of the word. In an unequalled work on the prehistory of satire in Arabic literature (*Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, Erster Teil, I), Ignaz Goldziher has shown with remarkable thoroughness how among the pre-Islamic Arabs wars were fought with words as well as material weapons. The most curious thing about this is that among them what finally decided the issue in war was not the strength of the latter so much as that of the former. Cursing or taunting by means of a specifically 'framed' language was counted among the most important elements of warfare, without which one could hardly hope to win the battle. For this purpose recourse was had exclusively to the "hijā" form of poetry—'satire' or taunt-song—which had originally been developed as a verse-pattern peculiar to the speech of magic and witchcraft, and an effective use of which was generally believed to be capable of destroying instantly the soul of a person to whom it was directed.

The use of of spells in warfare, couched in verse-form and sung or chanted with or without instrumental accompaniment is a phenomenon which is to be seen

far and wide over the the ancient world. In a well-known passage of the *Book of Judges* (5, 12) we see the prophetess Deborah sing with Barak:

'Ūri 'ūri D'bhōrah	Up, up, O Deborah
'Ūri 'ūri dabbe'ri shir.	Up, up with thy song!

It is obvious that the term "shir" here does not mean a 'song' or 'poem' in the ordinary sense of the word: it means a 'strong word', i. e. almost 'magical formula'. The use of the word in this specific sense is, as Otto Eissfeldt has pointed out (*Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, § 10), certainly an exceptional one, in so far as the Old Testament is concerned. In ordinary contexts it means simply a song chanted with instrumental accompaniment. But this unusual use of the word seems to indicate that in still remoter ages there was a time when the 'strong word' was simply called 'song'.

In view of these facts it would be quite understandable that there has always existed an extremely close relationship between prophetism and poetry. To the mind of early man there was naturally no distinction whatsoever to be made between the tribal poet and the tribal seer or prophet. Among the ancients, the poet was invariably a man of extraordinary psychic power, living in constant commerce with the unseen world. He who possessed the secret of the poetic use of language possessed by that very fact the mysterious knowledge of all things past, present, and future, revealed to him during his periods of inspiration. For poetry was, above all, *inspiration* in the fullest sense of the word. This agrees admirably with the evidence afforded by Old Arabic. The word "Shā'ir" ('poet') there, being the active participle of the verb "sha'ara" ('to know'), means properly 'one who knows' or 'knower'. But 'knower' of what? Ignaz Goldziher, in the above-mentioned study on the "Hija"-poetry, has shown conclusively that this word must have meant originally a possessor of a super-normal knowledge of occult things, and that among the pre-Islamic Arabs the most important function of a poet was to act as the diviner or seer of his tribe.

Such a conception of the poet's function will perhaps be best illustrated by the Biblical story of Balaam. He was an inspired poet; this meant, in the eyes of his contemporaries, that he was a mouthpiece of God. And in fact, because of his divinatory power he was held in the highest esteem. As a genuine poet-prophet, he could predict the course of future events; and the word of prediction going forth from his lips were believed to be invested with superhuman efficacy. In other terms, his inspired prediction could behave as a curse or a blessing as the case may be. When Balak, king of Moab, was in dread of the Israelites who had come swarming over the land, he sent messengers to Balaam with this appeal: 'Pray come and curse for me this people, for they are stronger than I am. Maybe I shall be able to strike them and drive them out of this country. For I

know that he whom thou blessest is blessed and he whom thou cursest is cursed.' (*Num.* 22) Everybody knows the result. Three times Balak takes him to a high place in order that the poet-prophet might aim the poisoned arrows of malediction directly at the enemy. But, instead of cursing, three times Balaam blesses them. In a manner which already reminds us of a Canonical prophet, he confesses that he is incapable of saying a word against God's will. 'From Aram (i. e. Syria) has Balak brought me. / The king of Moab from eastern hills. / "Come, curse for me Jacob, / Come, denounce Israel!" / But how can I curse whom God does not curse / And how can I denounce whom Yahweh does not denounce?' (23, 7-8).

It is generally held that the case of Balaam marks a transition stage on the way from the old Semitic vaticination to the authentic Hebrew prophecy. However that may be, the most remarkable thing about this event from our particular viewpoint is that the oracles he uttered in a state of prophetic trance are all fine examples of Hebrew poetry. The essential nexus between poetry and prophecy comes still more prominently into view with Canonical prophets. As is well known, their prophecies were mostly delivered in verse-form. Since in those days poetry was regarded as the real symptom of divine inspiration, a prophet could hardly hope to claim a hearing unless he uttered measured lines.

Indeed, this may be paralleled by examples from all races and from all ages. In ancient Greece, for instance, the oracular responses of Apollo at Delphi were embodied in poetic form. It is no accident that the Greek word "*omphē*", whose original meaning was 'voice', especially 'the modulated voice of song' (cf. Pindar, fr. 53), came to be used in the technical sense of an oracle or prophetic utterance; (see for example Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 101-103, where the blind Oedipus implores the Furies that they might grant him to close at last his weary life according to 'the oracle of Apollo' "*omphās tās Apollōnos*" which he received at Delphi in his early manhood.) So also in ancient China. As Marcel Granet has pointed out, the prophecies as recorded in the *Tso Chuan* 左傳 and *Shih Chi* 史記 are almost all in the form of songs composed *extempore* by persons put in a mantic seizure (cf. *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, Eng. tr. p. 208, n. 1).

In Arabia in the days of paganism, a particular type of rhymed couplets known as "*saj'*" was in exclusive use among soothsayers for vaticination. This word, with its original meaning of the 'cooing' of pigeon, reflects vividly the impression produced by the unusual muttering sound coming forth from the closed lips of a soothsayer in the state of divine madness. Ibn Hisham (*op. cit.* p. 171) mentions as distinctive marks of the soothsayer "*saj'*" and "*zamzamah*", the latter term being nothing more than an onomatopoeic rendering of the low, murmuring noise just referred to. Incidentally it may be remarked that the same term, taken over into Persia, has come to mean the similar whispering chant made by the fire-worshippers during their ablution. It is significant that Mahomet who, in



the early days of his prophetic career, had no alternative but to resort to this form of expression, had to struggle hard against being classed as a 'poet'.

Concerning the close relationship between the art of poetry and the ecstatic state of the seer there is another important point which is yet to be considered. We shall note, to begin with, that in ordinary magico-religious rites of primitive tribes, songs and chants are used not only for the purpose of giving vent to the intense emotions animating the crowd, but also for exciting or stimulating them in the minds of the participants. Similarly, in the case of the seer, some patterns of rhythm or metre, besides being vehicles of inspiration, act very often as powerful means of bringing on a fit of mantic frenzy. In other words, poetry or song is not always the result of ecstasy; in many cases it preceeds and provokes ecstasy. According to N. K. Chadwick, there is in the early Norse literature a very interesting story told of a seeress who, when demanded to give an oracle, insisted that she could not bring herself into the inspired condition until she could get a singer with a good voice to chant the required spells (*Poetry and Prophecy*, Chap. I). Indeed it is evident from ancient records and modern observations that the chanting of poetry is among the most universal means employed in the artificial regulation of ecstasy. To-day, in the more backward parts of the world we find everywhere shamans and medicine-men attaching a paramount importance to the practice of listening to music, whether vocal or otherwise.

Everyone knows of the effect of continuous rhythmic movements and sounds in inducing a state of exaltation or dissociation. It is a commonplace not only among poets but even among general public that certain rhymes and metres, certain modulations in speed and volume of the voice, have lulling or stirring effects even when the words used are devoid of all sensible meaning. Even meaningless ejaculations, if put in verse-form and chanted in tune, may produce a hypnoidal excitement in the audience as well as in the singer. This capacity to respond to rhythmic sounds, which modern people still retain, must have been much more prominent in early man. Primitives, as is well-known, are extremely sensitive to the stimulating effects of music and singing. Through listening to rhythmic sounds astonishingly varied 'attitudes' are easily brought about in them, ranging from simple emotions to burning raptures and ecstasies. Thus the emotional effects of poetry do possess a psycho-physiological basis, and therein lies the great value of rhythm and metre as a means of inner 'framing' of language. It is evident that the magical power of poetry cannot be simply ascribed to primitive fantasy or sheer superstition. And this makes us grasp the ultimate reason why poetry has always played such an essential role among mankind in the vital matters of both the individual and the society.

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THE STRUCTURE OF THE ETHICAL TERMS  
IN THE KORAN

— A Study in Semantics —

BY

TOSHIHIKO IZUTSU

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## PREFACE

This book is designed to be a preliminary to a larger study on the nature and development of the moral consciousness among the Arabs as mirrored in the history of their language. As regards the scope and purpose of this investigation I have said all I have to say in the earlier chapters of the book, and further discussion would only be a tedious repetition.

Except in a very few cases, I have always tried to give my own interpretation of the Arabic in quoting from the Koran and other literary works, though in the case of the Koran, I am, needless to say, heavily indebted to some of the earlier renderings by such scholars as Rodwell, Sale, Pickthall, and Arberry.

It remains only to express my grateful thanks to Professor Nobuhiro Matsumoto, from whom I have had constant encouragement and advice, and without whose help it would have been impossible to publish the book.

T. Izutsu

*Tokyo, 1959*

# ERRATA

Page	line	from	Read	Page	line	from	Read
7	6	top	difference	127	14	bot.	the
8	20	top	appellation	136	11	bot.	Ṣālih
9	13	bot.	formative	139	6	bot.	profitably <i>be</i> compared
21	11	bot.	on many occasions	141	9	top	appears
22	10	bot.	numerous	144	7	bot.	('aṣiy)
24	13	bot.	(dele 'interesting story of an')	145	19	bot.	well
	11	bot.	There is an <i>interesting story of</i> <i>an old pagan</i>	147	11	bot.	their wealth
30	11	bot.	(dele 'Muhammad and his followers')	149	15	top	(dele the exclamation mark after 'God')
	11	bot.	<i>Noah and his followers</i>	149	10	bot.	city
39	18	top	attempt	154	16	bot.	begin with, <i>that</i> the occurrence
45	12	bot.	pure	155	12	top	(dele 'and whosoever')
47	16	top	superlative		13	top	zālimūn
49	19	top	(dele the colon after 'Ghaziyyah')		12	bot.	zālim
	26	top	this <i>is</i> not in any	159	7	bot.	<i>he who</i>
55	11	bot.	These form	163	5	top	Koran
	10	bot.	approximately <i>be</i> rendered	164	3	bot.	How dare <i>you</i> commit
56	13	bot.	This point <i>is</i> of	165	6	top	do
57	6	bot.	belong	169	18	top	mid-way
59	17	top	personal	171	3	top	(kafarū)
	20	top	kindness	175	10	top	How, in a word, <i>is</i> an
62	3	bot.	(dele 'is' after 'expected')	181	10	top	Thereupon
68	23	top	in terms of	183	14	top	'thankfulness,
69	9	bot.	Keep not thy		7	bot.	whoso is thankless
72	23	top	destructive	189	11	top	thy
76	17	top	of serving	197	15	top	and <i>are</i> far
78	3	top	your	200	6	top	(muhtadina)
	6	top	believer	205	9	top	objective
79	24	top	Wafā	209	1	top	who <i>is</i> about to
	8	bot.	(dele the quotation mark before 'The')		2	top	Aaron
80	12	bot.	difficult	210	9	top	whether
82	11	top	'loyalty'	211	22	top	the <i>following</i> passage
84	6	bot.	your	223	14	top	good (khair)
87	17	top	As <i>a</i> matter of	226	7	top	good
89	20	top	We may do well to <i>call to mind</i>	227	3	bot.	Satan is
90	1	bot.	emphatically	229	5	bot.	His
93	9	bot.	zālimīn	233	16	top	istikbār
	5	bot.	God	235	1	bot.	(dele the quotation mark after 'one')
98	15	top	men	247	18	top	(tushrikū)
102	3-4		'negative'.....'positive'	262	3	bot.	which
105	18	top	(khāshi')	264	17	top	from <i>negative</i> to <i>positive</i>
108	4	top	tafsuqūm				

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## Chapter I

### THE SCOPE AND FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this book, as a whole, is to make a detailed study of the ethical language of ancient Arabia in so far as it is reflected in the Sacred Book of the Muslims. It intends to investigate by the method of semantic analysis the way the principal value-words are used in the Koran in specifically ethical contexts, that is, in sentences commenting upon human conduct or character.

Islam represents undoubtedly one of the most radical social reforms that have ever appeared in the East, and the Koran, the earliest authentic record of this great event, describes in vividly concrete terms how in the period of crisis time-honored tribal norms come into a bloody conflict with new ideals of life, begin to totter, and, after desperate and futile efforts to resist, finally find themselves forced to yield the hegemony to the rising power. The Arabia of this epoch, extending from the pre-Islamic time of heathendom to the earliest days of Islam is of particular interest for my purpose in that it provides excellent case material for studying the process of the birth and growth of a moral code.

In the so-called Age of Ignorance, that is, in the pagan period previous to the advent of Muhammad, strange custom and ideas connected with idolatrous beliefs were rampant among the nomadic Arabs. Most of these Islam rejected positively as essentially incompatible with Divine Revelation, but it also adopted a considerable number of them with modifications in form and substance and succeeded in making out of them high moral ideas to be incorporated into the new code of Islamic ethics. By following carefully the destiny of the ethical terms in the Arabic language through this most critical period of its history, I desire not only to grasp the guiding spirit of the moral code of Islamic peoples, but also to gain some fresh light on the more general theoretical problems of ethical discourse and the role it plays in human culture.

My immediate task is, I repeat, to give a detailed account of the key ethical terms of the Koran so as to bring out the truly characteristic traits of the Koranic moral conceptions as compared with those that were prevalent among the Arab tribes in the days of nomadic paganism. Now a subject like this may be approached along several different lines. We may, for instance, start from the elaborate systems of the Law of later ages regulating all the phases of human conduct to the minutest details, and look back from that stage on the Koran as the original source of all these commands and prohibitions. Or again, we may set to work picking up more or less systematically various teachings and opinions on morals contained in the Koran, put them in order, and write a book on the 'Ethics of the Koran'.

My concern in this book is of an entirely different nature from these and other similar undertakings. The difference comes from the analytic method I am going to apply to the Koranic data. In other words, what is central to my inquiry is not so much its materials as the method of linguistic analysis applied to them, the specific point of view from which it attempts to analyze the semantic structure of the value-words of the Koran in the field of conduct and character. Hence the necessity of discussing in some detail the nature of semantic analysis as a method of empirical investigation into the moral stamina of a people.

But before I embark upon this undertaking, I want to emphasize and clarify certain points concerning my basic attitude towards various theories of ethics. Since I do not pretend to offer here any more than an empirical study into the linguistic structure of the moral code of a people at one period of history, and that in so far as it is mirrored in their unique Scripture, it will be quite evident that I am not in any way aiming at constructing a 'theory' of ethics of my own. Nor am I, needless to say, going to defend the position of any of the many different ethical theories that have been offered to date by philosophers. The main task before me is to get first-hand knowledge about the conventional usage of moral discourse in the Koran, and as such my work will most conveniently be classified under the heading of what John Ladd has called *descriptive ethics* as a branch of cultural anthropology, which he defines as 'the investigation of the moral code and accompanying ethical conceptions of a person or group' and rigorously distinguishes from normative ethics which aims at providing knowledge of what to do and guidance for the right evaluation of conduct (cf. John Ladd, *The Structure of a Moral Code*, Introduction).

But this should not be taken as meaning that I am indifferent in this book to the problems raised by normative ethics. On the contrary, I began this work precisely because I believed that all findings in the field of sociological or anthropological studies of different customs in matters involving moral judgments will constitute inestimable contributions to the advancement of ethics as a practical science.

Today, as in the tumultuous days of the sophists in classical Greece or in the time of Confucius in ancient China, the bewildering changes in social life and the break-down of traditional ways and norms are forcing upon us everywhere a pressing need for thinking out afresh the fundamental rules of conduct and the ultimate standards of morality and valuation. We are painfully aware at the same time that any essential problem of ethics could not be satisfactorily solved through sheer abstract thinking on a plane which is too remote from the concrete facts of human experience. Even a cursory inspection of the history of ethical theories over two thousand years in the West will make it plain to everyone. If we want to succeed in establishing a theory of ethics not distorted

by any preconception and not based on the traditional ideas and practices of people belonging to one type of culture, the only way for us to take is, I believe, to carry out much intensive anthropological field work and—in the case of literate cultures—to analyze the texts with scientific rigour, with a view to describing in objective terms the ethical words and conceptions of as many various peoples at as many various periods as possible. It is only on the basis of some such world-wide survey of moral codes in all cultures known, literate and non-literate, that a sound, unprejudiced normative ethics will become possible. To say the least descriptive ethics will surely do much to elucidate the problems of normative ethics by clearing away many of its theoretical muddles. It was mainly in the hope of contributing in however modest a way to the attainment of this far-off ideal that I decided to make my present inquiry.

There remains one more important point to note before closing this section. In the foregoing paragraph I suggested the conception of a world-wide survey of moral codes. What I have in mind may very well be described as a project to revivify the now outdated comparative ethics in an entirely new form furnished with more scientifically reliable methods, a comparative study of widely different systems of moral ideas, each system having been explored beforehand separately by the rigorous method of induction. I should like to lay special emphasis here on what might appear at first glance almost a truism, on the importance of the principle of not placing much reliance on the indirect evidence of translated texts. If we really hope to establish our conclusions on a solid empirical basis, it is absolutely necessary that we should prepare our material for comparison by means of repeated application of the same type of analytic procedure to the key ethical terms of each language we wish to take into consideration. Translated words and sentences are partial equivalents at the very most; they may serve as handy guides giving a rough and ready orientation for the fumbling first steps. In many cases they are quite inadequate and even misleading. In any way they can never afford a reliable basis for discussion on the problems of ethical agreement and disagreement among various peoples.

As a matter of fact, recent developments in the field of cultural anthropology are too remarkable to be ignored by anyone interested seriously in problems of culture and human facts. Hence it comes that most of the contemporary writers on ethics are forced willynilly into paying some amount of attention to the existence of moral codes far different from those found in the cultural sphere of their own. Thus something taking on a superficial resemblance to comparative ethics is in vogue now; not infrequently we meet with such 'comparative' consideration even in the works of those who would hold that there can be no such thing as real pluralism in ethical matters, i. e., that the essence of man's morality is one and the same among all people in the world, irrespective of time and place.

Indeed, it is a remarkable fact that in a very great majority of cases, sweeping

conclusions of this kind are drawn from 'comparative' consideration of ethical terms not in the original but in translation. Morris R. Cohen in his *A Preface to Logic* (p. 164) has pointed out the danger of relying on the too easy equivalence of the Greek word *arete* with 'virtue' in discussing Aristotle's view on the nature of the 'virtuous' man. He remarks that the English word 'virtue' which is used almost exclusively as the equivalent of *arete* is very misleading; that *arete* would more accurately be rendered as 'excellence'—the object of admiration. Whether this latter view is right or not is a question I must leave on one side for the moment. Let us for convenience of exposition take it as proved by closer examination of all relevant passages in which the word *arete* occurs. Suppose now someone were to set out to write a paper on the conception of Virtue among the ancient Greeks gathering his data from the English translations of Plato and Aristotle in which *arete* happens to be rendered invariably as 'virtue'. The danger of his attempt is patent. Taking the wrong equivalence *arete*=virtue as the right one, and without stopping a moment to question the validity of this formula, he might be led into futile discussions on the nature of Greek 'virtue' or on the divergencies in the opinion of English and Greek peoples about the essence of 'virtue'. The semantic content of the English word 'virtue' would in this way be read gratuitously and unconsciously into that of a Greek word which has in fact nothing in common with it except perhaps some vague connotations of personal excellence, and admirableness.

Unfortunately mistakes of this type are encountered very frequently in contemporary ethical literature. The fact will come prominently in view when, for example, we take the pain of examining carefully the passages written by some Western scholars who avail themselves only of English translations in forming their views on the ideas of righteousness and justice in Japanese Shintoism or Chinese Confucianism. There are in Japanese and Chinese number of words which would correspond with a varying degree of approximation to 'righteousness' and 'justice': But whether we are unquestionably justified in founding a comparative ethics on such vague equivalences is extremely doubtful. The same is true of the Arabic word *ṣāliḥ* whose semantic structure will be subjected to rigorous analysis in a later passage. This word is generally translated in English 'righteous'. I shall show how little it has in common with the English adjective 'righteous' with regard to its semantic constituents.

Far be it from me to assert that all attempts of the kind just described are entirely useless and meaningless. That would be another piece of sweeping assertion. All I want to emphasize is the grave danger of being unconsciously led into erroneous theories about the nature of morality by using translated documents without subjecting them first to scientific procedures of criticism. I am not an extreme historical relativist. 'The more we study moral codes,' writes Nowell-Smith, 'the more we find that they do not differ on major points of principle and

that the divergencies that exist are due partly to different opinions about empirical facts.....Thus all codes agree that we have a duty to requite good with good; but obedience to this rule will involve behaving in ways that will differ according to the view that a society takes of what it is to do good to someone, (*Ethics*, Chap. I, [2]). He seems to be quite right here and perhaps no objection can be raised against him as long as he speaks of moral codes in terms of such abstract principles, away from all divergencies of opinion coming from concrete facts. Perhaps at this high level of abstraction the human nature is the same the world around, and I do not deny the possibility of establishing in this way a number of most general rules of morality which will be common to all human beings qua human beings.

The more fundamental issues of morals, however, arise in my view rather in the much lower realm of empirical facts and practical experience. It is here, in the midst of concrete reality of human life in society, that the semantic content of every ethical term is formed. If the view of what it is 'to do good' varies from society to society, then the semantic structure of the word 'good' itself must of necessity be different in each case. But even this presumes already the existence of a word in every language that would correspond both in meaning and use more or less adequately to the English word 'good', which is admittedly one of the vaguest and most fuzzy words in the language. In any events, it is, as a matter of methodological principle, safe not to begin by making such unwarranted assumptions if we are to avoid at all the above-mentioned danger of falling into the common pitfall of projecting unconsciously the structural characteristics of our own language upon semantic contents of the vocabulary of other people.

These considerations have, I think, explained a good deal about the position I am going to maintain concerning the semantic aspects of the fact of language. As I wrote above, it will be my basic attitude throughout this work to maintain a strict objectivity in dealing with observed facts and to decline to take sides between the various conflicting theories current in this subject. But on the topic of the interconnection between language and culture I am going to take up a very definite position. And this will give unavoidably a marked personal coloring to my outlook on the problem of ethical terms. In somewhat more concrete terms, I shall strongly incline to a pluralistic theory which holds that people's views as to what is good and bad, or right and wrong differ in different places and different ages, and that fundamentally, i. e., not as trivial details to be explained away as different degrees in the scale of a unitary cultural development, but as more basic cultural divergencies having their roots deep down in the language habits of each individual community. This problem of the essential relation between the semantic patterns of a language and those of cultural behavior of the people who uses it, together with some important methodological problems that will arise from such a position, will constitute the theme of the two following chapters.

## Chapter II

## THE SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF WORDS

In the preceding chapter I tried to describe the broad outlines of the proposed study, laying special emphasis on the fundamental attitude I am going to adopt towards the problem of ethical theories. Since, however, the real peculiarity of any investigation is determined chiefly by the method it employs and the particular point of view from which it approaches its subject matter, it would be wise to give at this stage of inquiry a detailed exposition of the methodological principles that will guide me throughout the whole course of my work. By so doing I hope I can also make sufficiently clear from the outset the nature of the problems with which we shall be most radically concerned.

Now the vocabulary of our ordinary discourse is composed of words which are in most cases astonishingly obscure and vague. That this is particularly true of the so-called ethical terms will at once become clear from even a superficial review of the literature on the analysis of one small, innocent looking word 'good' that has caused the most controversial discussions in contemporary moral philosophy. The method of semantic analysis I am about to practise in this work consists in applying a careful procedure of linguistic analysis to the meaning structure of each word, in splitting up its complex structure of meaning into a number of well-defined constituents. This might seem an unattainable ideal. It is indeed nothing more than a programmatic ideal, and in some cases it is in practice impossible to hope for more than a rough approximation. I shall have ample occasion later to show, however, that with the help of an adequate method of analysis, we can, in the majority of cases, hope to get a very important insight into the semantic mechanism of moral discourse.

'Semantic' analysis, as the name itself reveals, literally means to analyze the structure of any word along the lines indicated by the articulations of its meaning. It is clear that everything here hinges ultimately on what we understand under 'word-meaning'. The conception of meaning is the very pivot round which all our subsequent discussion turns. Thus once again we find ourselves faced with the same old problem: What is Meaning?

In place, however, of putting our question in this form — I mean the form of What-is-X? — which is, in the phrase of Richard Robinson, 'the vaguest of all forms of question except the inarticulate', let us formulate it in somewhat more precise terms and ask: What sort of event do we understand when we say that something behaves as a sign or symbol? For to say that something has a meaning for us is to say that it works upon us as a sign or symbol. Sign phenomenon

and meaning phenomenon are exactly the same thing, or rather they represent two distinguishable aspects of one and the same event.

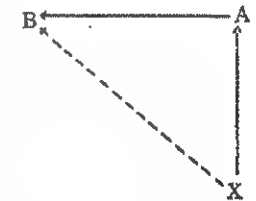
It should be noted at once that the term 'sign' itself is an example of extremely vague and ambiguous words. And although in recent years genuine efforts have been made in many quarters for furthering a comprehensive science of signs — or precisely because of that — there is today a very remarkable difference of opinion even on the elementary question of deciding when something is a sign. In the face of this situation the use of at least a limited number of arbitrarily stipulated definitions would be unavoidable in my exposition. On the other hand, I shall endeavour to exclude as far as possible theoretical complexities that would serve only to add irrelevant difficulties to my problem.

Charles Morris in his valuable work, *Signs, Language and Behavior* (p. 8-p. 10) introduces the term *preparatory-stimulus* in his formulation of the set of conditions sufficient for something to be a sign. A preparatory stimulus differs from ordinary stimuli in that it elicits a response in an organism — an *interpreter*, according to his terminology — to something other than itself. This is in fact a cardinal point to notice in any sign event. His definition of sign-behavior runs as follows: 'If anything, A, is a preparatory-stimulus which in the absence of stimulus-objects initiating response-sequences of a certain behavior-family causes a disposition in some organism to respond under certain conditions by response-sequences of this behavior-family, then A is a sign'.

I should like to reformulate this definition in a more plain language in such a way as to make it more convenient for my immediate purpose, though by so doing I shall inevitably cause it to lose much of its original scientific precision. Nor will it be necessary at all for me to take into account the intricate problems that arise about sign phenomena at sub-human levels.

With these reservations we might say generally that we have a sign event whenever something, A, acts on an interpreter, X, in such a way that a response is elicited in X, which is appropriate not to A itself, but to something else, B. A in such a case is said to be the sign of B, or to 'mean' B. Conversely B is the 'meaning' of A. In every case, A begins by drawing the cognitional attention of X, but instead of rivetting it upon itself, it immediately switches it off into the direction of something else, B. When, for example, someone hears the sound 'table', his attention, through the very act of recognizing the verbal sound, is directed towards a certain familiar sort of the object which is extra-verbal, and he ends by reacting, if he shows any reaction at all, in a way appropriate not to the original sound stimulus but to this extra-verbal object.

In language signs, A is in every case a vocal sound, while B can be anything, any object or event, any imaginable phenomenon. And this radical difference in the



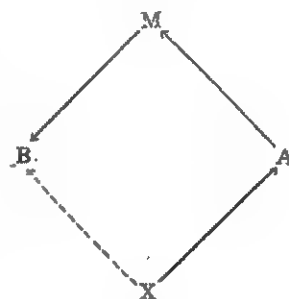


order of being between *A* and *B* constitutes one of the most characteristic features of human language, causing all linguistic sign-relations to be of quite a different sort from those holding, for instance, between smoke and fire, black clouds and rain, etc. This, however, does not exhaust the subject.

The real point of importance to note in connection with linguistic signs, the most radical distinguishing mark which makes them a unique class of signs among all others, lies in the peculiar nature of the relation between *A* and *B*. The peculiarity comes from the fact that *A* connects with *B* not immediately but only mediately; that is, between a linguistic sign and the thing it refers to there is always recognizable a particular region of mediation. It is this intermediate region — designated as *M* in the diagram shown on the right — that makes human language an eminently cultural affair.

C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards who were the first persons to introduce a serious discussion of the problem of word-referent linkage into their semiotic considerations, attempted to illustrate this indirectness of relation by means of the now famous diagram of 'basic triangle'. As anyone concerned with the problem of linguistic meaning knows, they gave the appellation of 'reference' to what corresponds to *M* in our diagram, in distinction from the nonlinguistic thing or event (*B*), which they called 'referent'. In accordance with the main trend of contemporary analytical philosophy, I shall designate these two aspects of word-meaning by the terms 'connotation' and 'denotation'. Thus the 'denotation' of a word will mean in this book the nonlinguistic category of referents, i. e. all the things or events to which the word is applied, while the 'connotation' of a word is a certain set of characteristics in virtue of which the word is applied to this and only this class of referents.

Understood in this way, the whole process of 'meaning' will correspond exactly to the process of categorization described by Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin in their *A Study of Thinking* (1956). In this outstanding work on the phenomena of cognitive activity, the categorial activity, as one of the basic operations of the human mind is defined as the act of rendering discriminably different things equivalent, the act of grouping an array of objects or events in terms of those characteristics that distinguish this array from other objects or events in the universe. And the evidence of a 'concept' having been attained is said to be that the subject can identify without further training new instances of the category with better than chance success. This point has an important direct bearing on the subject of the methodological principles of my work. Attention should be focused on the term 'characteristics' in virtue of which an array of things is said to be grouped into a nonlinguistic category, and which alone is said to make possible the correct



patterning of naming behavior. But of this much will be said in a later context.

The importance of the connotative aspect of meaning process cannot be too much emphasized. I have in my previous work on *Language and Magic* (1956) tried to explore the hidden structure of connotation and the profound influence it has exerted upon the development of the human mind. There I have in the nature of the case treated the subject exclusively in terms of verbal magic. Here the same subject must be approached from an entirely different angle.

It will be clear from the foregoing that the world of extra-verbal reality, understood as the world of denotata, is a collection of a large number of nonlinguistic categories. The connotative system of language, on the other hand, may be correctly described as an organization of semantic categories. Language in its connotative aspect represents itself primarily as a system of articulatory patterns in accordance with which we dissect the perpetual flux of nature into a certain number of entities and events. This process of dissection or segmentation, as Benjamin Whorf called it, varies with each linguistic system. In his pertinent words, each language is a 'a provisional analysis of reality' for 'language dissects nature differently'. Even the same kind of ordinary experience is usually segmented by different languages in different ways. Even out of one and the same situation different languages tend to isolate different groups of essentials (cf. Benjamin Lee Whorf: *Language, Mind, and Reality* 1941.). This process of segmentation results in the semantic categories of each language.

It is to be noticed that the semantic categories are a body of officially defined cognitive patterns, a cultural acquisition handed down traditionally in the society. The process whereby they are acquired by an individual is the process of cognitive socialization. By learning how to use them correctly, every member of the speech community acquires the traditional ways of sorting out the world around him. Language with its web of connotative patterns may in this sense be justly said to be formative of the so-called 'real' world we live in. Every connotative system embodies a particular world-view which transforms the raw material of experience into a meaningful, interpreted world.

It may be recalled that the formative power inherent in all connotative categories was pointed out long ago by Wilhelm von Humboldt, and was indeed made the cardinal point of his semantic doctrine. Commenting on the words of this great master to the effect that language is not to be regarded only as a means of mutual communication, but first and foremost as a real world, which the human mind must place between itself and reality through the creative activity of its own (G.W. VII, 176), Leo Weisberger remarks: 'Hier ist also unmissverständlich die Sprache, und zwar wiederum jede einzelne Sprache, gesehen als ein geistiger Gestaltungsprozess, der dem Menschen überhaupt erst seine Lebenswelt als einen überschaubaren Zusammenhang und damit als Kosmos, als Welt gegenwärtig macht ..... Das

gestaltende Prinzip dieses Umschaffens der Welt in das Eigentum des Geistes ist die innere Sprachform, durch sie wird in jeder Sprache der eigenständige Vollzug des Umprägens von 'vorgegebenem Sein' in einen Kosmos 'bewussten Seins' gelenkt' (*Vom Weltbild der deutschen Sprache*, p. 14, 17).

Linguistically, a moral code is part of such a meaningfully interpreted world. This might at once remind the reader of John Ladd's contention in the above-mentioned book that a moral code is part of an ideology. There are in fact many points of resemblance between us, and these may be due in the last analysis to the fact that in establishing my own theory I owe much to his penetrating insights into the nature of moral discourse. There is, however, one basic difference between my method of procedure and his. The difference lies in this point, namely, that he has carried out his investigation of the Navaho ethics on the evidence of ethical 'statements' as distinguished from 'sentences'. In more concrete terms, he relied on translated informations as his primary evidence. At the outset of the Part I of his work, we find him trying to justify his position by drawing a clear-cut distinction between a *sentence* and *statement*. The sentences 'Das Haus ist weiss', 'La maison est blanche', and 'The house is white', he argues, are different sentences but they all make one and the same statement. In the 'statement' one does not have to specify what words are actually employed to communicate it, nor does it matter at all what language it is couched in. He goes on to say that this particular characteristic of the 'statement' was especially valuable in reporting his interviews with his native informant, because, since he did not understand the Navaho language, he could not know what sentences the informant used (op. cit. p. 21).

Now this, as was suggested earlier, is exactly the contrary of what I am about to do in my work. From my standpoint, what matters most is the uttered *sentences* of an informant, not his *statements* which are claimed to remain the same in whatever language they may be clothed. The existence itself of some such thing as 'statement' common to many different languages seems to me highly questionable. If, as Roger Brown suggests (*Language and Categories*, Appendix to the above-cited *A Study of Thinking* p. 311), even such commonplace words as *mère* and 'mother' are not strictly identical, and the French word *amie* differs in an important way from German *Freundin* and English 'lady friend', it is quite unlikely that a sentence used to communicate a moral judgment in one language should be precisely duplicated in other languages.

Edward Sapir has repeatedly remarked that even comparatively simple acts of perception are controlled in large measure by the social patterns of connotation, and are therefore culturally relative. (See for example, his *Selected Writings*, p. 162). If this is so, how much more should this be true of valuational acts in the field of human conduct and character. Every culture has a number of traditional patterns of moral evaluation which have become crystallized historically in the body of its

ethical terms, and these conversely furnish the speakers of the language with a complete set of channels through which to categorize all moral phenomena. By using the handy tool of the semantic patterns of their native language, the members of a speech community can easily analyze, report, and evaluate any human act or character. But this, on the other hand, involves a commitment to living in strict conformity with the norms of choice and evaluation that are codified in the ethical terms of that language.

If the main contentions of the preceding pages are correct, it would follow that we should regard the ethical terms of a language as constituting a peculiar kind of 'semantic field', composed of a tangled web of cognitive categories covering practically all possible instances of valuational situation in the society. Our next problem is to devise a scientifically reliable method for analyzing the fundamental structure of this kind of 'semantic field'.

## Chapter III

## THE METHOD OF SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

In the last chapter I expounded in some detail my view of the structure of word-meaning and emphasized the importance of paying special attention to the connotative aspects of the problem in all semantical discussion of words. This immediately raises the question of how it is possible then to explore the semantic categories of a given language in a way that will fulfill the requirements of a scientific investigation. 'Scientific' here means primarily empirical or inductive, as little prejudiced as possible by any prepared theoretical position of moral philosophy.

Leaving the task of giving my reasons to suitable later points, I shall begin by stating outright that the best way to proceed in this type of inquiry is in my opinion to try to describe in every case the semantic category concerned in terms of the relevant extra-verbal conditions eliciting the particular word. To know the *meaning* of a certain word in this sense is to know under what nonlinguistic conditions it is correctly used, or, if it be preferred, to know what features of the environment must necessarily be there if such and such an event is to fall definitely in the class designated by the word.

The choice of this method of procedure as the most adequate one follows directly from my basic assumption about the semantic behavior of linguistic symbols as exposed above in detail. As I have repeatedly emphasized, the basis on which my whole inquiry rests is my conviction that language must, in its connotative aspect, be regarded first and foremost as an important manifestation of the categorizing activity so characteristic of the human mind. For a detailed account of the process of categorization in general I should like to refer to the above-mentioned excellent work *A Study of Thinking* by Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin.

According to the authors of this book, categorization may best be defined as the cognitive operation by which organisms code the events of their environment into classes of equivalence. For anything or any event to be classified in this way, it must possess a certain number of defining attributes, by virtue of which such categorial differentiation becomes at all possible. The evidence for the existence of a category is the occurrence of common response to an array of objects or events on the part of the organisms concerned. A category once formed, the individual begins to show a marked tendency to respond to an array of objects and events in terms of their class membership rather than their uniqueness (Chap. I p. 1-24). It goes without saying that in the specific context of the present inquiry, this common response manifests itself as a common naming behavior.

It will be evident in the light of the explanation given in the preceding chapter

that the ethical terms of a given language form a particular system of such categories, which, together with many other categorial systems of a similar fundamental structure, is comprised within the larger connotation system of the language in question. It will be no less clear that, from the standpoint of the searcher, the central problem is to seek by the empirical method of induction the defining attributes for each ethical term, by virtue of which an illimitable number of discriminably different persons or acts are categorized into an equivalence class and thus receive a common name. By examining the key ethical terms in a language through a painstaking process of such analysis, the investigator may gradually come to know the basic structure of the categorial system through which all events involving moral evaluation are filtered before appearing in an accessible form to the minds of the members of that language community.

It will have been noticed that the process just described is precisely the process of language learning in children. The meaning of this is that in this type of inquiry the investigator places himself deliberately in the awkward position of an infant beginning to learn to speak its mother tongue or that of an anthropological linguist faced with an entirely unknown language. Perhaps we may most profitably remind ourselves at this juncture of the Original Word Game, referred to by Roger Brown in the paper cited above, *Language and Categories* (*op. cit.* p. 284-285). In this Game, the player always begins by trying to correlate a particular utterance of the tutor with a nonlinguistic category by carefully observing the performance of the latter. In order that the player gets a high degree of success in his attempt, he must first of all succeed in isolating correctly the criterial features of the piece of non-linguistic reality. He must, in other words, discover just those aspects of the stimulus which elicit just that kind of verbal behavior from the tutor. For he might otherwise form quite an inappropriate sort of categorization by mistaking contingent contextual implications for relevant conditions, and consequently fail to identify new instances correctly.

The task is indeed no easy one. In most cases a whole process of trial and error has to be gone through before the player grasps as he should the tutor's usage of words. And so it is, essentially, with our investigator. He sets out to observe minutely all the available instances of the actual usage of ethical terms, analyzes carefully the situational contexts, constructs hypotheses, which in turn he must check against further evidence, revises them if necessary, and in this way he may at last arrive at a satisfactory solution of his problem.

This is, in outline, what I am going to do in coping with the ethical terms of the Koran. But of course in my present case I am not so severely handicapped as the infant possessing as yet no language, or even as an anthropological linguist. For classical Arabic is one of the best known languages in the world, explored to the minutest details of both grammar and vocabulary, albeit mostly along lines removed from the ideal of scientific reliability. We have some good dictionaries;

the number of excellent philological works is innumerable; and, in the domain of the Koranic exegesis in particular, we are provided with many authoritative old commentaries. However, for theoretical reasons put forth earlier, my methodological principle forbids me to rely too heavily on these secondary sources. They are to be utilized at the very most as valuable auxiliaries; we must not forget that they might prove even positively more misleading than enlightening in some cases if we neglect to observe great caution in availing ourselves of evidences coming from them.

All this might give an impression that I am making the problem needlessly difficult, when the object of inquiry is but a well-explored language. That this is not the case will, I hope, be gradually made clear in the course of this book. Here I want only to draw attention to one important point. This seemingly tedious round-about way of proceeding has a very obvious advantage over all others as a practical method of dealing with ethical terms. It enables us to analyze words of moral evaluation by the same process as words of other kinds. Viewed from the standpoint of this method, ethical terms — particularly those belonging to the 'primary' level of ethical language (cf. Chap. XIV) — stand quite on a par with ordinary name-words, such as 'table,' 'apple,' 'eat,' 'walk,' 'red,' etc. For the underlying process of learning is essentially the same in all types of words.

The process of language learning in children has been described in broad outlines a few paragraphs earlier. The task of the child beginning to learn the usage of say, 'apple,' consists in trying to establish first of all a denotative relationship between the phonemes of the word and the extra-verbal familiar sort of the fruit by observing the naming behavior of the parental tutor. And by repeating this process many times he acquires the capacity of grouping new instances into the equivalence class APPLE by means of such perceived properties as size, color, and shape. In just the same way the child learns the usage of moral vocabulary. That is, the way he learns how to apply a particular ethical term to a particular type of environmental situation does not differ in any essential point from the way he learns how to apply the word 'apple,' to a certain sort of objects in terms of whatever criterial attributes are perceptible.

It should be noticed that I am not setting forth an argument in favor of the intuitionist theory. As we all know, G. E. Moor maintains that the ethical term 'good' stands for an unanalyzable simple idea in the domain of moral experience just as 'yellow' stands for a simple idea in the region of sense-perception. Words standing for simple ideas cannot be analyzed, and consequently cannot be defined, whether the latter be natural or non-natural; they are just there before the mind's eye to be apprehended directly and immediately. Thus moral properties, if there be such, are treated in this type of theory as objective phenomena that are only grasped by a non-sensuous — but analogous to sensuous — intuition.

Now from the particular point of view of the student of linguistics there is no need at all here to postulate, as some philosophers still prefer to do, such a mysterious

faculty of non-sensuous intuition. Nor should I, by speaking of criterial or defining attributes, be taken as suggesting the existence of such non-natural moral properties as unique objects of some intuitive awareness. All I am concerned to argue is that the fundamental structure that underlies the learning process is the same both in the case of words standing for ordinary physical objects and empirical qualities and that of words for moral evaluation. For it is after all through the process of so-called ostensive definition that the use of both kinds of words is learnt. The learning of valuational terms is also, in the last analysis, simply an affair of the conditioned reflex.

Ostensive definition, according to Bertrand Russell, becomes effective only under certain conditions: there must be, to begin with, a feature of the environment, standing out distinctively against the background, interesting enough emotionally to draw attention, frequently recurring, and the tutor must frequently utter the name of this feature before the child when the latter is particularly attentive (*Human Knowledge* Chap. II). The role of the child will be to imitate this naming performance of the tutor, and, by imitating it on all occasions, to acquire little by little the capacity of categorizing any event or thing he is likely to encounter in the society in accordance with the system of the publicly accepted categorial patterns of the culture. This act of categorization, as I have said, is naturally impossible without the preliminary process of learning to isolate in each case whatever characteristics of the environment are necessary for grouping together discriminably different events as equivalent. And this process may in the nature of the case far more complicated and difficult with words like 'good' and 'right' than in the case of words relating to concrete objects and directly perceptible qualities. But at least this much is demanded of the child if he is to participate at all in culture.

In recent years great discussion has arisen as to the nature of ethical terms: whether they are descriptive or prescriptive, whether they are referential or emotive, whether moral judgments in which they occur are empirical statements or mere matters of personal taste, etc. These may very well be problems of the greatest interest to the student of moral philosophy; to a linguist concerned with the semantic analysis of ethical terms from the specific standpoint just expounded they all turn out to be rather of a secondary significance. Since, however, a brief account of my personal opinion on these matters will help to bring out the point I am making concerning the adequacy of my method of investigation, perhaps a few general remarks will not be out of place here.

Let us start with a consideration of the problem whether or not ethical terms are descriptive. But before we can successfully examine this important problem, it seems necessary to do some clearing of the way. In the concluding chapter of this book we shall see ourselves driven to draw a theoretical distinction between ethical terms of the 'primary' level (such as 'humble,' 'generous,' 'pious,' etc.) and

those of the 'secondary' level (such as 'good,' 'bad,' etc.). Now with the 'primary' ethical terms there can possibly be no question of their essential descriptiveness. The word 'generous,' to take an example, is evidently, first and foremost, a genuine descriptive word standing for a concrete factual content; but, at the same time, it evaluates the quality so designated as being something praiseworthy, and this it is that makes the word more than mere description: it is primarily descriptive, and secondarily evaluative. Words like 'good' and 'bad,' on the contrary, are primarily and essentially evaluative. And with these words questions of very great difficulty may reasonably be raised as to whether they are descriptive or not. In the present context it is to this 'secondary' level of moral discourse that I refer under the name of 'ethical terms,' and it is also this class of words that moral philosophers have usually in mind when they discuss the problem of ethical language.

With these preliminary notions in mind, I shall begin by stating that ethical terms cannot be recognized as descriptive expressions, at least in the sense in which those who argue in favor of their descriptive nature are wont to use the term 'descriptive.' I have already examined the thesis of the intuitionist philosophers. Their argumentation, in a highly condensed form, amounts to something like this. All words, if they are to have any meaning at all, must denote something. What, then, do ethical terms denote? They denote a special kind of non-natural properties, called values. They are in this sense descriptive of a world of values. I have also already given my reasons for thinking it unnecessary and irrelevant to introduce the existence of such a mysterious world into the discussion of moral vocabulary.

There is a cruder variant of this theory — which, be it remarked in passing, represents the point of view of common sense — that ethical terms stand for natural qualities like 'goodness' that inhere in some objects just as ordinary adjectives denote physical properties such as redness and hardness. It should be remarked at once that this view of denotation is completely at the mercy of a very wide-spread illusion caused by the semantic pattern of adjective, which, wherever there is a living sense of such a grammatical category, tends to present anything as an inherent quality. This phase of the problem I have dealt with in my previous work with copious examples from many different languages (in the chapter entitled 'The Structural Evocation'). So it is not necessary in the present context to go into further details about it. There is, however, one important point here which needs elaborating. The point I have in mind has a direct bearing on my theory of semantic categorization as expounded above.

First let us notice that these two variants of the view maintaining — each in its own characteristic way — the descriptive nature of ethical terms, have a modicum of truth in their contention. They suggest, rightly to my mind, what might appear at first as a truism, namely, that for an ethical term to be uttered there must be always something actually noticed in the nonlinguistic world, which elicits the utterance. The actual utterance 'X is good,' for instance, always presupposes

that the speaker has noticed a characteristic feature or a set of characteristic features in the environment in virtue of which the particular word, 'good' has been evoked.

This argument may bring to mind at once the theory of consequential properties. As is well-known, in this type of theory goodness is explained in terms of 'good-making properties.' I think this theory is fundamentally unexceptionable in so far as we take the 'good-making properties' in the vague sense that for an instance of the word 'good' to occur there must be in the environmental context something which tends to elicit it. Insurmountable difficulties appear in the way only when one seeks to interpret the link between 'good' and the good-making properties in terms of logical entailment. It is rather in terms of cultural categorization that this relation should properly be explained.

There is a characteristic or a set of characteristics that are such that whenever and wherever they happen to be noticed by a member of the society, they tend to elicit from him the utterance of the word 'good,' and conversely, whenever and wherever it is uttered it tends to awaken in the hearer a common type of expectation towards the occurrence of these characteristic features in his environment. And this reciprocal relation between non-verbal and verbal conditions it is that provides a cultural mold into which certain phases of our individual experience are cast and thereby made to assume a communicable form, i. e. become the experience of 'goodness.' I have remarked above that for an ethical term to be actually uttered there always must be something in the extra-verbal situation that elicits the utterance. It is clear now that this 'something' is not a non-natural moral property, but a set of environmental conditions that happen to be correlated as a matter of tradition and culture with a certain verbal category. The task of the semantic analysis of ethical terms will consist in every case in isolating the extra-verbal conditions to which an ethical term is the appropriate verbal reaction.

Next we shall consider very briefly the emotive aspects of ethical terms. The non-descriptive theories of ethics developed by R. Carnap and his followers are too well known to require detailed exposition. The central thesis of this school is that value-words do not in the last analysis describe anything; they are primarily nothing but expressions of emotions; they do not even *denote* emotions, but are as C. L. Stevenson points out (*Ethics and Language* III, 1-2), rather akin to such natural manifestations of the emotions as laughs, groans, shrieks, and sighs. By the very act, however, of giving vent to his feeling and emotion, the speaker may — and in most cases does — arouse similar feeling and emotion in the mind of his hearer, and thereby influence him to feel or behave in a certain manner. These two closely related aspects are made the distinguishing marks of the behavior of all value-words. Thus the sentence 'He is a good man,' for instance, in spite of its appearance of descriptiveness, does not in fact describe anything, because it does not impart information about the objective world, which is capable of being either true or false.

That we cannot reasonably accept the emotive theory in this extreme form will



be evident in the light of the account given above of the categorizing function of name-words. For to categorize someone as a 'good man' is to describe the person in terms of a certain set of characteristics which are usually associated with the utterance of the word in a given age in a given society. The phrase 'good man' does in this important sense convey information of a factual character, and brings us directly into the middle of a social reality. And in this reality it does make sense to question the truth or falsity of such a sentence as 'He is a good man' no less than of a sentence like 'This is an apple.' This, however, should not be taken as denying the existence of an emotive element in value-words.

We cannot certainly equate 'X is good' with 'I approve of X,' if only for the simple reason that the underlying process of categorization is markedly dissimilar in each case. But we cannot deny either that there is in fact recognizable a very great amount of emotiveness in the expression 'X is good,' which is not found ordinarily in factual propositions and which may appear to justify, to some extent at least, the attempt to assess the meaning of 'good' in terms of approval, satisfaction, liking, reverence and the like. Moreover, the explanation of this phenomenon is not far to seek. A simple appeal to facts in our social life will be enough to show whence and how this emotive element comes in. As R. M. Hare has remarked pertinently (*The Language of Morals* II. 9. 2.), the emotivity of much moral utterance comes from the fact that the situations which elicit it most typically are as a rule situations affecting the intimate lives of ourselves and our neighbors. It would be evident that such a state of affairs cannot remain without influence on the very apparatus of semantic categories. Sooner or later the process of categorization begins to assume a peculiar coloring of deep emotive tone. In other words, the common affective quality of a certain type of experience becomes so to speak an objective fact of the world, and by becoming an objective fact it may even become one of the defining attributes eliciting the utterance of an ethical term.

Practically the same sort of thing may also be said about the problem of the prescriptive nature of moral language. As a matter of fact, it would seem quite odd in an ordinary context of moral discourse if we were to assert that we understood perfectly the meaning of an ethical term without committing ourselves thereby to doing acts of the sort in question. To know the meaning of words like 'good' and 'right' is at the same time to adopt this or that line of conduct. The knowledge of the meaning in this sphere would otherwise be deemed incomplete. For the ultimate end which a moral word serves is to commend or condemn behavior, and such evaluation would be meaningless if it does not have practical effects upon the actions of men. Evidently Nowell-Smith is right in maintaining that the point of telling anyone that Jones is a good man is that Jones be imitated, that he should be given the job, etc. The real purpose of this kind of utterance is not to tell you what sort of man Jones is, but to tell you to do something with regard to the person in question (*Ethics* Chap. I, [I]).

But is it also right to assert, as Nowell-Smith does, that the utterance was never intended to be a description of anything, that it was from the start assumed to be an injunction to do something, to adopt this or that course, to subscribe to this or that moral code? It may, in the long run, turn out to be so. But this is also to leap over one important stage in the analysis of ethical words. I think I have already given my reasons for declining to take this line of argument. So I shall not repeat them here. I shall bring this section to an end by drawing attention once again to the fact that, although the essential function of an ethical term may perhaps be admitted to consist in influencing men in some direction in matters that concern human conduct, this can only be achieved by passing through first the process of verbal categorization. And it may be that this is the meaning of the important distinction of which Hare speaks (*op. cit.* I. I, 7) between *telling* someone to do something and *getting* him to do it. Be that as it may, it is certain that from the standpoint of the theory of semantic categorization the prescriptive behavior of ethical terms is but a derivative and secondary function, however important a role it plays in the context of practical discourse. First categorizing, then prescribing — this is the rule of behavior for all ethical terms. Any theory of ethical terms would inevitably be incomplete, which ignores this first stage, for it would no longer be an analysis of ethical language. For an attempt to solve problems of moral philosophy through an analysis of the language in which they are posed and answered without, however, taking into account the most important characteristic of all human language would be nothing but a case of methodological self-contradiction.

## Chapter IV

## THE APPLICATION OF THE METHOD

In the present chapter I propose to illustrate by a number of concrete examples the actual procedure I am going to follow in applying the method of semantic analysis to Koranic data in the latter parts of the book. Since the object of this inquiry as a whole is the analysis of the key ethical terms to be found in the Koran, it is evident that my immediate task will be to describe in detail under what precise conditions and in what concrete situations they are actually used, and then to analyze methodically the gathered material with a view to isolating the criterial situational attributes for each ethical term. As a matter of fact the specification of such criterial or defining attributes will often prove extremely difficult, if not impossible, for lack of a sufficient amount of internal evidence. In many such cases recourse will be had very profitably to the authority of the Arab philologists and commentators as well as to some of the representative works of modern Arabic scholarship. But our basic rule must always be to try to elucidate as far as possible the semantic structure of the words in question within the strict bounds of the Koranic contexts, to let, in brief, the Koran interpret for us its own words.

There is a variety of ways in which one gets to know the meaning of a foreign word. The simplest and commonest — but unfortunately the least reliable — of them all is by being told an equivalent word in one's own tongue: the German word 'Gatte', for example, means the same as the English 'husband'. In this way the Arabic word *kāfir* might be explained as meaning the same as 'misbeliever', *ẓālim* as 'evil-doer', *dhanb* as 'sin', and so on. There can be no question of the fact that there is recognizable some sort of semantic equivalence in each case; on the other hand, anyone acquainted with the Arabic language will have to admit on reflection that these apparently nearest equivalents are far from being able to do full justice to the original words. A *ẓālim*, for instance, is not exactly an 'evil-doer'; between *kāfir* and 'misbeliever' there is a difference too important to be ignored.

In the preceding pages I have repeatedly sounded a warning against drawing hasty conclusions from such equivalences. In point of fact translation method turns out to be far more frequently misleading than enlightening. Nor is this fact very hard to account for. As Richard Robinson has rightly seen (Definition Ch. II, 2), every word-word definition — of the *Gatte*-means-husband type — implies a word-thing definition to those who know already what 'husband' means in English. In exactly the same way, if the equivalence *ẓālim* = 'evil-doer' is given to those hearers or readers who know only the meaning of the word on the right-hand side,

they have in the nature of case no other means of learning the meaning of the left-hand side than by using the semantic category of the former as the only possible basis of inference. In other words, they understand, if they do understand at all, the meaning of *ẓālim* not directly but only by the analogy of the connotation of 'evil-doer'. By going through the semantic category of another word formed and developed in the tradition of an alien culture, the meaning of the word is necessarily exposed to the danger of getting distorted indefinitely. To avoid this danger, measures should be taken to transform the original word-word definition not into such an indirect kind of word-thing definition, but into a direct word-thing definition, correlating the word immediately to a certain definite piece of nonlinguistic reality. This cannot be achieved except by the above-described method of semantic analysis.

To translate *ẓālim* by 'evil-doer' or 'wrong doer' may be a very simple expedient for getting to know the meaning of the word, and presumably no one will deny the advantage of this means as a first practical step of language learning. But it is just a first step. If we wish to grasp the semantic category of the word itself we must go on to inquire what sort of man, what type of character, what kind of acts are actually designated by this name in Old Arabic — in our specific case, in the Koran. Even a single example, provided it is a well-selected relevant one, may prove extremely illuminating. See for instance Surah VII, v. 42-43 of the Koran, where we read;

The curse of God is on the *ẓālims*, who try to bar from God's path, desire to have it crooked, and would never believe in the next world.

Does it not constitute in itself a kind of verbal definition of *ẓālim*? And we have in the Koran a huge number of similar examples of the usage of the same word. By gathering them in one place, comparing them with one another, checking them against one another, may we not reasonably hope to get an original word-thing definition, so to speak, of this Arabic word? That this is possible will be shown on many occasions in the course of this book.

Turning now to the equivalence *kāfir* = 'misbeliever' (or 'disbeliever' or 'unbeliever'), we may observe at once the essential difference of the outward structure itself. Unlike the equivalence *murūwah* = 'manliness' to be discussed below, the left-hand side and right-hand side of this equivalence show no correspondence in word-structure. The Arabic word *kāfir*, to begin with, is an independent unit of structure which is unanalysable further into component elements. The English equivalent on the other hand — whichever of the three mentioned we may choose — clearly consists of two parts: (1) an element implying negativity ('mis—', 'dis—', 'un—') and (2) another element representing, so to speak, the material side of the meaning.

This part of material meaning is in the three cases invariably 'believer.' This is to say that the semantic categories of the English equivalents of *kāfir* are all based on the fundamental concept of belief.

There is, to be sure, no denying that the semantic category of the Arabic word *kāfir* itself contains in a covert way an important element of 'belief'. But this, it must be remembered, comes from the fact that in actual usage *kāfir* has been very frequently employed in contrast to the word *mu'min* which means a 'believer' or with the word *muslim* meaning one who has completely surrendered himself, heart and mind, to the will of God, i.e., after all, a sincere believer. More generally speaking, the semantic category of a word tends very strongly to be influenced by the semantic categories of the neighboring words belonging to the same meaning field. And when the nature of a word is such that it comes to be used with remarkable frequency in some specific contexts alongside of its antonym, it must of necessity acquire a noticeable negative value from this frequent combination. So it is no wonder that there exists a large overlapping area between *kāfir* and 'misbeliever' or its synonyms. But there is a number of differences between the two, and very significant ones. The most significant of them all is this. A detailed analysis of the actual usage of *kāfir* reveals that the real core of its semantic category is by no means 'un-belief', but rather 'ingratitude' or 'unthankfulness'.

As we shall see later on, in Islamic religion one of the keynotes of belief is gratitude, thankfulness. And this is the counterpart of Muhammad's conception of God as the gracious, merciful Lord of men and all nature. In fact Muhammad never tires of emphasizing the purely gratuitous act of benevolence on the part of the Almighty God, which He bestows upon all beings. In return, man owes Him the duty of being thankful for His grace and goodness. *Kāfir* is the man who does not, would not show any sign of gratitude in his conduct.

It may be interesting to note that the most basic meaning of the root *KFR* from which this word is derived seems to be that of 'covering'. This would naturally come to mean in religious contexts 'to cover benefits received'. The verb *kafara* denotes the characteristic attitude of those who, having received God's gifts of benevolence, try to conceal and ignore them, who are ungrateful to the gracious God, who even take the offensive against Him. A glance at numerous examples of the Koranic usage given in a later chapter will show in a very convincing way that this is the fundamental meaning of the word in the majority of relevant passages of the Sacred Book. *Kāfir*, in short, should be interpreted not so much in terms of 'belief' as in terms of 'gratitude'.

The semantic discrepancy between words and their foreign 'equivalents' naturally increases as we turn to those regions of existence where unique modes of vision tend to dominate and where language is charged with the task of reflecting and expressing the truly ethnic features of a people's life. Indeed we might lay down as a general rule that the more any word is expressive of a deep-rooted ethnic

feature of a given culture the harder it becomes to transpose it properly into another language. There are in every language a certain number of words that are notoriously untranslatable. Such is for instance English 'humour', French 'esprit', or German 'Gemüt'.

Such are also words like *ḥamāsah*, *murūwah*, and *jahl* in Old Arabic, which are all so typical of the life and manners of pagan nomadic Arabia in contrast to Islamic ethical culture. The first word, *ḥamāsah*, is explained by R. A. Nicholson (in *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 79) as denoting a peculiar combination of bravery in battle, patience in misfortune, persistence in seeking blood-revenge, protection of the weak, and defiance of the strong. As we shall see later, this is but a very rough and ready sort of approximation. But even this much cannot properly be conveyed by the English word 'courage' or 'bravery', which is usually given as its meaning.

Now if we allow ourselves to follow this all too schematic — to my mind — way of talking a step further and add to this conglomeration of noble qualities two more important elements, that lavish generosity so characteristic of the desert Arabs, so well typified in the semi-legendary stories about Ḥatim of Ṭayyī, and the unswerving loyalty to tribal interests which is no less characteristic, then we have another virtue called *murūwah*. This represents the highest idea of morality among the Bedouin, the virtue of virtues, or better still, all the ideal virtues of the desert combined into one. The word *murūwah*, as far as concerns the outward form, seems to correspond admirably well with 'man-ness', being composed of a radical with the meaning of 'man' (as opposed to woman) and a formator which confers on all radicals to which it is annexed an abstract sense of quality or property. So the word means etymologically something like 'the property of being a man', and one may feel amply justified in using the English word 'manliness' as if it were an exact equivalent of *murūwah*. As a matter of fact, this may do in contexts where no need arises for semantic precision. But it must be always borne in mind that the equivalence between the two is limited to the purely formal side of word-structure. And it is precisely where the purely formal ends that semantic problems of real import begin to emerge. For the content of *manli-ness* itself must of necessity vary according as this or that set of features of *man* is chosen as the keynote of the semantic category. And the number of the characteristic features of man to choose from is practically limitless. Even supposing that all languages agreed on the point of considering the quality-of-being-a-man sufficiently relevant to social life to give it an independent linguistic expression, each language would have its own peculiar way of selecting a certain number of features from among many and its own peculiar way of combining the elements thus selected into a particular semantic category. So it is with the Arabic *murūwah*. Its meaning, as a semantic category, has behind it a long history of nomadic life in the Arabian waste; it is so deeply immersed in the atmosphere of desert life, that only copious notes

about the latter can make it understandable in its true peculiarity.

The third of the three words mentioned above, *jahl* has a story of a somewhat different kind of interest to offer. Since a consideration of this word is of direct relevance to the immediate subject of my book, I shall here describe in some detail the basic structure of its semantic category. I shall thereby try to avoid as far as possible the needless repetition of what Ignaz Goldziher established a good many years ago in his famous study (*Muhammedanische Studien* I, 1888, p. 319 sq.).

Before Goldziher published his paper and showed in a conclusive manner how one should properly understand this word, *jahl* had long been thought even among the Arab philologists to be the exact opposite of *ilm* 'knowledge', with, consequently, the basic meaning of 'ignorance'. So it came about quite naturally that the most important derivative of this word, *jāhiliyyah*, by means of which Muhammedans used to denote the state of affairs before the rise of Islam, was generally understood — and translated — as the 'Age of Ignorance'. Now the method which Goldziher adopted in his attempt to elucidate the original meaning of the word coincides in all essential points with what I call in this book the method of semantic analysis. He collected a large number of important examples of the actual usage of the root *JHL* in pre-Islamic poetry, subjected them to a careful analysis, and reached the remarkable conclusion that the usual traditional opinion about *jāhiliyyah* was fundamentally erroneous. *Jahl*, according to his conclusion, is not the opposite of *ilm*; in its primary sense, it stands opposed to *ḥilm*, which denotes 'the moral reasonableness of a civilised man (Nicholson)', including roughly speaking such characteristics as forbearance, patience, clemency, and freedom from blind passion. In the usage of later ages — and even in pre-Islamic poetry sometimes — we find *jahl* ordinarily used as the real antithesis of *ilm*, but this is only a secondary and derivative sense, its primary semantic function being to refer to the implacable, reckless temper of the pagan Arabs.

Let us now turn to the problem: How did Muhammad himself conceive of the interesting story told of an state of *jāhiliyyah*? What did the word mean to Muhammad and his contemporaries? In the *Sīrat an-Nabīy* ('The Life of the Prophet') by Ibn Ishāq there is an old pagan called Shās ibn Qais. The event occurred not very long after the Prophet's flight from Mecca to Medina. This 'enemy of God' was an old man, most stubborn in offering resistance to the new religion and showing the bitterest hostility to the followers of Muhammad. One day he passed by a group of Anṣārs from Aus and Khazraj, two important Madinite tribes, once implacable enemies of each other, but now tied together by a newly formed bond of friendship under the leadership of the Prophet and fighting for a common cause. When he saw them talking together happily and friendly, he was suddenly filled with envy and rage. He secretly instigated a Jewish youth to go and sit with them and to remind them of a series of blood-feuds and ferocities that had happened in pagan times by reciting some verses composed by the poets of both sides.

Things went as he wished. A violent quarrel arose among the people. And at the provocative words of one of them, 'Do you desire to recommence it? We are ready!', all went out to a volcanic tract near by, crying 'To arms! To arms!'

When the news reached the Prophet he hurried to the spot and said to them, 'O believers, how dare you forget God? Are you again tempted by the call of the Jahiliyyah (*bi-da'wā[y] al-jāhiliyyah*), when I am here among you, when God has guided you to Islam, honored you, and cut off thereby the bond of Jahiliyyah from you (*qaṭa'a bi-hi 'an-kum amra al-jāhiliyyah*) delivered you from disbelief, and made you friends of each other?' Upon this they realized that all this was due to Satan's instigation, and wept embracing one another (Ibn Ishāq-Ibn Hishām, ed. Wüstenfeld, I, 385-386)

This passage brings out two important points concerning the word in question. First, that the *jāhiliyyah* was conceived by Muhammad and his companions not as the period of time preceding the rise of Islam, that had now passed away, but rather as something of a dynamic nature, a certain spiritual state that had apparently been driven away by the new force of Islam from the bright stage, the secret survival of which was nevertheless still palpably there even in the minds of the believers, ready to break in at any moment upon their consciousness; and that this was felt by Muhammad as a standing menace to his religion. Second, that the *jāhiliyyah* had practically nothing to do with 'ignorance'; that it meant in reality the keenest sense of tribal honor, the unyielding spirit of rivalry and arrogance, and all the rough and rude practices coming from an extremely passionate temper.

It is precisely here, if anywhere, that the true significance of the Islamic movement as a grand work of moral reformation must be sought for. In brief, Muhammad's whole work on its ethical side may very well be represented as a daring attempt to fight to the last extremity with the spirit of *jāhiliyyah*, to abolish it completely, and to replace it once for all by the spirit of *ḥilm*. Ibn Ishāq has preserved for us another piece of interesting tradition which throws much light on this aspect of *jāhiliyyah*.

Immediately after the occupation of Mecca in A. H. 8, Muhammad sent out troops in the surrounding regions of the town. It was a work of pure missionary zeal; he ordered them only to invite people to Islam in friendly terms. Among those sent out as missionaries was the valiant Khālid ibn al-Walīd, known by the nickname of the 'Sword of Allah', and he came to a tribe called Banū Jadhīmah. When the people saw him they seized their weapons to fight. Khālid assured them of his peaceful intention and ordered them to lay down their weapons, for, he said, all other people had already accepted Islam; war was now over and everybody was safe.

But when they in effect laid down their arms notwithstanding the sincere warnings of a man of the tribe, Khālid tied their hands behind their backs and began to behead them. The news reached Muhammad in Mecca. Thereupon he is said

to have raised his arms so high that 'his armpits could be seen' and cried three times, 'O God, I am innocent before Thee of what Khālid has done!' Then he ordered his son-in-law 'Alī saying, 'Go at once to the people, examine thoroughly the affair, and trample down the custom of the Jahiliyyah (*Iʿal amra al-jāhiliyyah tahta qadamai-ka*).' 'Alī hurried to the district with great sums of money and paid for all the blood and property (*ibid.* II, 834-835). It may be worth remarking that a little further on in the same passage, we find a certain person commenting on this behavior of Khālid with the words: 'You have done an act of the Jahiliyyah (*ʿAmilla bi-amri al-jāhiliyyah*) in the midst of Islam'.

Those two incidents give us an important hint as to what was meant by the word *jāhiliyyah* at the time of Muhammad. They allow us also to get a real insight into the ethical motives that underlie the movement of Islam. It will be clear that what Muhammad was aiming at was a complete moral reformation of the people based on the abolishment of the *jāhilī* practices and their replacement by certain types of conduct arising from the spirit of *ḥilm*.

In the colossal Arabic dictionary, *Tāj al-ʿArūs* by az-Zabidī VIII, the word *ḥilm* is defined as 'the act of reining one's soul and holding back one's nature from the violent emotion of anger' and in *Muḥīt al-Muḥīt* by al-Bustānī (I, 443-444) as 'the state of the soul remaining tranquil, so that anger cannot move it easily; and its being undisturbed on the occurrence of any calamity', 'the state of calm tranquility notwithstanding attack of anger', and 'being slow in requiting the wrong-doer'. It should be noticed that *ḥilm* was no new discovery of Muhammad. On the contrary, it was one of the most highly esteemed virtues even among the old pagan Arabs. Only it lacked a firm ground. The genuine Arabs of the desert have always been notoriously passionate people who may be moved to any extremes on the smallest provocation. Tranquility of the soul — the *ataraxia* of the Greeks — is for them the most difficult thing to achieve, and if achieved, to maintain for long. In order, therefore, that *ḥilm* may become the real pivot of all moral life, it must be given first of all a firm basis to stand on. This was furnished by the sincere belief in Allah, the sole Creator of the whole world. It is to this *ḥilm* firmly grounded in monotheistic belief, the moral reasonableness of a religiously cultured man, that *jāhiliyyah* stands diametrically opposed. Let us now turn to the Koran itself to see whether or not the examples it offers confirm this interpretation of the word.

There are in the Koran number of verses in which various derivatives from the root *JHL* occur. The form *jāhiliyyah* appears four times, namely, in Surah III 148, V 55, XXX 33, and XLVIII 26, of which the last is perhaps the most important. It runs as follows;

When in the hearts of those who persist in unbelief arose the characteristic arrogance, the arrogance of *jāhiliyyah*, then God sent down His peace of soul upon his Messenger and upon the believers, and

imposed upon them the formula of self-restraint, for that was most befitting to them and they were most suited for that.

What I have translated here by the 'arrogance of the Jahiliyyah' — *ḥamiyyat al-jāhiliyyah* — refers to that haughty spirit of a tribal man, the vehement insolence and pride so characteristic of the old pagan Arabs, the most stubborn resistance against all that showed the slightest signs of injuring their sense of honor and tending to destroy the traditional ways of life. It is to be remarked that this spirit of passionate resistance is here made to contrast sharply with the calmness of soul sent down from Heaven upon the believers, and their spiritual disposition to maintain control over themselves in critical situations, to conquer their own passions and to remain tranquil and forbearing in the name of religion. From the standpoint of Muhammad, the *jāhiliyyah* was a blind, savage passion which characterized those who 'did not know to distinguish between good and bad, who never asked pardon for the evil they had done, who were deaf to the good, dumb to the truth, and blind to Heavenly guidance (Ibn Ishāq, II, 603). In his view, it was this dark blind passion that had inspired endless blood-feuds, and caused countless miseries and disasters in the history of the pre-Islamic Arabs. It was the real fountain-head of all the barbarous practices of pagan days.

The three remaining examples of the use of the word *jāhiliyyah* seem not so significant from the semantical point of view. They are all used to describe some aspects of either the moral attitude or the outward behavior of those who would not accept the monotheistic religion, or of those who, though Muslims on the surface, do not really believe in God at all and begin to waver on the first occasion.

I give next some of the good examples showing the usage of the two other derivative forms of the same root: one is the participial-adjectival form *jāhil* (appearing mostly in the pl. form *jāhilīn*), and the other is the verbal form *jahila* in its various forms of conjugation.

(I) In Surah XII, 33, Joseph in Egypt, who begins to feel himself defenceless before the onslaught of the women's temptation, addresses God and says:

O my Lord! I would sooner be cast into prison than do that which these women urge me to, yet if Thou turnest not from me their temptation, I shall surrender myself to a lustful passion for them and so become one of the *jāhilīn*.

This passage owes its particular interest to the fact that it is found in a non-religious context, thus showing a purely secular use, so to speak, of *jāhil*. In this context the word seems to mean the reckless behavior of those who easily fall victims to the violent passion of carnal desire and make themselves knowingly blind and deaf to the distinction between what is right and what is wrong, which is



evidently the exact opposite of the nature of *hilm* as explained above.

(2) XXXVII, 55-56

And [remember] Lot, when he said to his people, 'How dare you commit such abomination while you can see? Do you indeed approach men with lustful desires instead of women? Nay, you are a people whose conduct shows every sign of *jahl* (*tajhalūna*).'

In this passage we see the people of Lot, that is, the people of Sodom described as behaving in a characteristically *jāhil* way, 'approaching' as they do 'men lustfully rather than women', which is an 'abominable sin' *fāḥishah*. The semantic analysis of the latter word will be given in a later chapter. Here it may suffice to note that in this example too what is primarily understood under the word *jāhil* is a man who goes to any extremes at the mercy of his own passions, and that not ignorantly — 'while you can see' — i. e. being fully aware of the fact that by acting in this way he is approaching an abominable sin. This example is of particular significance in our present context in that it shows clearly that *jāhil* has essentially nothing to do with 'ignorance' though it implies the act of ignoring wilfully the moral rule of *hilm*.

(3) Surah VI, 33-35

We are well aware of the fact that thou [Muhammad] art grieved to hear what they are saying. Yet it is not thee that they cry lies to; the signs of God it is that they deny, these evil ones (*qālim*)! Thou art not surely the first of [Our] messengers to be cried lies to; there have been many such. But they all showed remarkable patience no matter how mercilessly they were cried lies to and hurt, until at last Our help came to them. .... Now if it is hard for thee that they turn away from thee, well, if thou canst seek out a hole down into the earth, or a ladder up into the sky, to show them (something like) a divine sign, [attempt to do it thyself! But since as a matter of fact thou canst never do such a thing, it would be better for thee to remain patient.] Had God so willed He would have Himself brought them all to the guidance. So be thou not one of the *jāhilīna*.

The commentary of al-Baiḍāwī explains this last sentence by paraphrasing it in this way: Be thou not one of the *jāhilīna* by desiring what is naturally impossible to obtain and by getting impatient in those situations to which it is patience that is most befitting; for that is a characteristic act of those who are *jāhils*. It may be remarked that this is a passage in which Allah consoles and admonishes at the

same time the Prophet who, utterly distressed and disappointed at the stubborn 'turning away' of his folk, is beginning to take a gloomy view of the future. God reminds him that there were many Prophets before him who suffered from the same sort of adverse fortune, that they, however, endured it patiently, putting absolute confidence in the Providence of God. And He ends by commanding Muhammad to follow their example and not to get impatient in vain. It will be evident, then, that *jāhil* in this passage also means a man whose mind tends to be easily thrown into agitation by the operations of anger, grief, desperation, or any other emotion.

(4) Surah VI, III.

Even if we should send down the angels unto them, or the dead should speak to them, or We should gather against them everything in array, they would never believe — unless God so willed. After all most of them always reveal themselves to be characteristically *jāhil* (*yajhalūna*).

I shall begin by remarking that in this and the following examples *jāhil* has something to do in an essential way with belief-unbelief. The word, as is clear, describes here those people who prove themselves too haughty and arrogant to 'surrender' unresistingly to the new religion, whose spiritual ideals are in many important respects utterly incompatible with those of the old pagan Arabs. This of course implies that, viewed from the standpoint of the Arabian paganism itself, they are the true representatives of its spirit, who, whatever should happen, would maintain unswerving loyalty to the traditional, tribal virtues of their country. They are the people who never respond to the call of Muhammad except with sheer derision and contempt. In the next example the policy of indifferentism and 'turning away' is recognized as the ideal attitude for all pious believers to adopt towards people of this kind. It goes without saying that in point of fact this could not at all be Muhammad's permanent policy towards the infidels, but the example is of particular interest in connection with our present problem, for it helps to bring out in a striking manner the fundamental opposition between *jahl* and *hilm*.

(5) Surah XXVIII, 55

When they [i.e. the pious believers] hear vain talk [i.e. what the misbelievers talk about God, prophets, and revelation without knowing the truth about these matters], they turn away from it saying, 'We have our deeds, and you have yours. Peace be upon you! We have nothing to do with the *jāhilīna*'.

(6) XXXIX, 64-65

Say: 'What! Is it something other than God that you would have

me serve, O you *jāhilīna*?' It has been revealed to thee as well as to those before thee, 'If thou dost associate [aught with God], thy deed shall be lost, and thou shalt surely be in the number of those who lose.' Nay, but God do thou serve, and be of those filled with thankfulness.

In this example the word *jāhil* is used to denote those addicted to the idolatrous practices of paganism, who, not content with 'associating' other gods with Allah, even bid others to do the same. Here, be it remarked in passing, the *jāhil* is opposed to *shākir*, one who is filled with gratitude. In discussing the problem of the semantic category of *kāfir* I have already drawn attention to the fact that in Islamic religion belief is fundamentally conceived of in terms of gratitude for benefits received. Exactly the same use of *jāhil* is found also in the following passage in which the idolatrous inclination of the Israelites at Moses' time is described:

(7) Surah VII, 134-136

And We made the children of Israel pass across the sea, and they came upon a people addicted to the worship of idols that were in their possession. 'Moses', they said, 'prepare for us a god like the gods they have.' He replied, 'Verily you are a people whose conduct shows every sign of *jahl*.'

(8) XI, 27-29 and 31

And We sent Noah to his people, 'I am obviously for you a warner [admonishing you] to worship none save God, Verily I fear for you the chastisement of a painful day.' Then said the chiefs of the people, who were *kāfir* 'As we see, thou art nothing more than a mortal like ourselves. As we see, none follows thee rashly except the vilest amongst us. As we see, you [i.e. Muhammad and the Muslims] have no claim to superiority over us. Nay more, we think you are liars!' [To this Noah replies in v. 31] 'As I see, you are a people whose conduct shows every sign of *jahl*.'

The next example places likewise a particular emphasis on the very strong and tenacious nature of the resistance to the revealed religion on the part of the *jāhilīna*.

(9) Surah XLVI, 20-22

And recall also the brother of 'Ād [i.e. the Prophet Hūd] when he warned his people in the district of winding sandhills — saying, 'Worship none save God. I fear for you the chastisement of a painful day.' They said, 'Hast thou come in order to turn us away

from our gods? Well, then, bring us what thou dost warn us against, if thou speakest the truth.' He said, 'No one knows the truth save God. My task is only to convey to you what I am sent with. But I see now you are a people whose conduct shows every sign of *jahl*.'

I have mentioned in an earlier place the 'arrogance' of heathendom (*hamiyyat al-jāhiliyyah*), the haughty spirit of resistance to all that threatens the foundation of tribal life, that vehement arrogance, as A. J. Arberry has put it (*The Seven Odes*, p. 263), which, after having caused in earlier times countless bloody feuds in the desert, now drove the pagan Arabs, alike of town and desert, to the relentless persecution of Muhammad and his followers. The examples (8)-(9) illustrate admirably this phase of the meaning inherent in the word *jahl*.

All things considered, it will be clear by now that in the semantic category of *jahl* there is comprised the central notion of a fierce, passionate nature which tends to get stirred up on the slightest provocation and which may drive man to all sorts of recklessness; that this passion tends to manifest itself in a very peculiar way in the arrogant sense of honor characterizing the pagan Arabs, especially the Bedouin of the desert; and lastly that in the specifically Koranic situations the word refers to the peculiar attitude of hostility and aggressiveness against the monotheistic belief of Muhammad, which was, to the mind of most of his contemporaries, too much exacting ethically, and which, moreover, called upon them to abandon their time-honored customs and their dear idols.

In the foregoing sections I conducted a somewhat detailed semantic analysis of the words derived from the root *JHL*, and that for two main purposes: first, in order to describe in broad outlines one of the most important features of the spiritual state of Arabia at the time immediately preceding the rise of Islamic religion, and thus to give some preliminary notions of what I am going to say in the following chapters about the fundamental principles underlying the moral attitude of Muhammad. In the second place, I wished to show in a concrete example the general characteristics of the method I shall apply to my material. This second aspect is of course the more important from the standpoint of this chapter which purports to be essentially methodological. And I have, I believe, made sufficiently clear that the method of semantic analysis here practised is a sort of contextual interpretation. It is to be noticed that for this method the materials gathered are not all of equal value: they differ from one another in the degree of contextual relevance, and consequently they must be assessed and utilized each according to its peculiar worth. So before ending this chapter I think it worth while to note down, albeit in a quite summary way, the practical rules of the technique of contextual interpretation.

In a very valuable booklet *La Traduction du Latin*, which is designed to give

some 'practical advices' for those desiring to become good translators of Classical Latin, J. Marouzeau emphasizes that the best maxim regarding the way by which one gets clear about the meaning of an obscure word is first and foremost 'rapprocher, comparer, mettre en rapports les termes qui se ressemblent, qui s'opposent, qui se correspondent'. To this he does not forget to add: 'A propos de chaque mot non compris, appelons à notre secours tout l'ensemble du passage où il figure.' (p. 38). This piece of 'conseil pratique', which might give on first hearing an impression of a needless commonplace, is in reality a very clever résumé of all the essential points in the procedure of contextual interpretation. The tremendous importance of this advice will leap to the eye when we go on to amplify it by illustrations. 'To bring together, compare, and put in relations all the terms that resemble, oppose, and correspond with each other' — there can be indeed no better maxim for us to adopt in our attempt to analyze the Koranic data.

It will be seen that, viewed from the particular angle suggested by this maxim, the mere fact of a given ethical term appearing in the same passage repeatedly is not in itself of any strategic importance for semantics. For any passage to acquire a peculiar semantical significance, it must be such that it works as a specific context revealing in a full light some aspect or aspects of the semantic category of a given word. In Surah XXXV, 37, for example, the root *KFR* which I discussed earlier in this chapter appears six times in succession. The passage runs as follows. (As the fundamental semantic structure of the root is quite clear now, I do not see any harm in translating it provisionally and for convenience of style by English 'disbelief'.)

Whoso disbelieves (*kafara*), his disbelief (*kufr*) shall be on his own head. Their disbelief (*kufr*) will only serve to increase for the disbelievers (*kāfir*) abhorrence in the sight of their Lord. Their disbelief (*kufr*) will serve to increase for the disbelievers (*kāfir*) naught but loss.

We shall note that in this passage any of the words derived from the root *KFR* does not give us any information worthy of notice concerning the basic sense of *KFR* itself. True, we may thereby further our knowledge about the causal relationship in which the human act of *kufr* stands to divine anger and chastisement. But this is the utmost we can make out of it, and we must not forget that for any reader of Koran, this point is abundantly clear even without the aid of this example, a fact which reduces its strategic value almost to nullity as far as concerns semantic analysis. When, in the following chapters, I proceed to the enterprise of analyzing the key ethical terms of Koran, I shall intentionally leave out all examples of the kind just described. In this sense my investigation makes no pretence at being exhaustive.

Now there are roughly speaking seven cases where any passage clearly assumes a strategic importance for the method of semantic analysis. These I should like to explain here very briefly one by one.

(1) The simplest case in which a passage is semantically relevant occurs when the precise meaning of a word is elucidated concretely in its context by means of verbal description. This is what may best be termed 'contextual definition'. A very good case in point is furnished by the following example. It is found in Surah II, v. 172, and the word in question is *birr*, which is translated in English sometimes by 'piety', sometimes by 'righteousness'.

The *birr* does not consist in your turning your faces towards the East or the West, but [true] *birr* is this, that one believes in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Scripture, and the prophets; that one gives one's own wealth, howsoever cherished it may be, to kinsfolk, orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, and beggars, and also for the sake of [the liberation of] slaves; that one performs the ritual prayer, pays the alms [i.e. the poor-due]. And those who keep their covenant when they have once covenanted and are patient in distress and hardship. These are they who are the sincere; these are they who are godfearing.

The phrase 'turning your faces towards the East or the West' refers specifically to the ceremonial or ritualistic requirement of the Islamic faith regarding the form of divine service. The passage declares in most emphatic tones that *birr* — 'piety' we might roughly say — in the true sense does not consist in observing outwardly the rules of religious formalism, but true 'piety' is that kind of social righteousness that naturally arises from a deep monotheistic faith in God. The problem *birr* will come up for further consideration at a later stage. Here it is sufficient to draw attention to the significance of this kind of example from the point of view of my method of analysis.

(2) In the second place, we may note the particular value of synonymous expressions for the purpose of semantic analysis. This occurs when a word *X* is substituted before our eyes in the same passage — or in exactly the same kind of verbal context — by some other word *Y*, whether the range of application i.e. the extension, of *Y* be wider or narrower than that of *X*. The replacement of a given term by its synonym or one of its synonyms in the same sort of context turns out very often to be a great help for us in investigating the semantic category of either the one or the other, or even both. See for example Surah VII, v. 92-93.

We [i.e. God] have not sent any prophet unto any town but We seized the people thereof with distress (*ba'sā'*) and hardship (*ḍarrā'*), that haply they might grow humble. [v. 92] Then did We change evil (*sayyi'ah*) for good (*ḥasanah*) so that they increased in number, and said, 'hardship (*ḍarrā'*) and happiness (*sarrā'*) did touch our fathers'. [v. 93]

From a comparison of the verse 92 and the verse 93 it will be readily seen that the phrase *ba'sā'* — and — *ḍarrā'* in the former is replaced in the latter by *sayyi'ah* without any essential change of meaning. And to see this is nothing other than coming to know for certain that the word *sayyi'ah* which is recognizedly a near equivalent of 'evil' or 'bad', may be used in certain contexts to convey the meaning of something like 'hardship', 'misery', 'distress', etc. We observe further that this *sayyi'ah* is contrasted in 93 with the *ḥasanah* with the usual meaning of 'good' or 'goodness', which, in turn, is substituted in the same passage by *sarrā'* meaning approximately 'joy' or 'happiness'. So in sum we have here two closely correlated equivalences in the semantic field of good and bad in Arabic, which, given for the sake of convenience in a rough and ready schematic form of English translation, would appear as follows:

good = happiness, joy  
evil = distress, affliction, misery

Here is another example. In Surah XII, generally known as the Chapter of Joseph, v. 28-29, the Egyptian Governor says to his wife who, having failed to solicit and tempt young Joseph off the straight path, has tried to bring him under a false charge of an abominable act:

'This is an example of your women's deceit; verily how prone you are to deceit! Joseph, turn away from this. And thou, woman, ask forgiveness of the transgression; verily thou art a sinner'

The meaning conveyed by the word which I have provisionally translated by 'transgression' — *dhanb* — reappears in the next sentence in another form of expression: 'thou art a sinner', more literally, 'thou art one of the *khāṭi'ina*, i.e., one of those who commit or have committed a *khāṭi'ah*, a word which is usually translated 'fault' in English. It follows from this that we may feel justified in establishing, as far at least as concerns this and other similar contexts, the formula of equivalence: *dhanb* = *khāṭi'ah*. Are the left-hand side and the right-hand side perfect synonyms in the present context? This is a point which we cannot decide at this stage. Suffice it to note that the famous commentator al-Baiḍāwī says that *dhanb* is located on a higher level in the pyramid of concepts and gives as the differentia of *khāṭi'ah* with regard to *dhanb* the element of intentionality. According

to him, *khāṭi'ah* is a specific kind of *dhanb* committed wilfully and deliberately.

(3) Thirdly, we might mention the case in which the semantic structure of a given term is elucidated by contrast. The word *khair*, for instance, is perhaps the nearest equivalent of the English word 'good' in the moral sense. But there are in Arabic many other words that appear to participate concurrently in the general connotation of goodness, of which we have actually seen one in the preceding section — *ḥasanah*. The difference between *khair* and *ḥasanah* will be made clear to a considerable extent by the knowledge that *khair* is generally used in opposition to *sharr* whereas *ḥasanah* is opposed to *sayyi'ah*, so that we have:

*khair* ←→ *sharr*  
*ḥasanah* ←→ *sayyi'ah*

If we can ascertain by any means the precise meaning of any one of the four terms, we shall get so much the clearer also about the meaning of the remaining three.

Sometimes we find two different words standing in opposition to one and the same third term. Thus *kāfir* whose basic meaning I have tried to establish earlier in this chapter, is most commonly contrasted with *mu'min* 'believer'. But there is another word — *fāsiq* — which is contrasted with no less frequency with the same word *mu'min*. Thus:

*fāsiq* ←→ *mu'min* (one who believes)  
*kāfir* ←→ *mu'min* (one who is ungrateful; an ingrate, a disbeliever)

It will be interesting to note that this alone is able to give us a hint (albeit of course a very vague one) as to what kind of man a *fāsiq* is, even if we have no previous knowledge of the meaning of the word. Since, on the one hand, it is opposed to *mu'min*, and stands, on the other, on the same footing as *kāfir*, the word *fāsiq* must denote some detestable property of man with regard to religious matters, and presumably a man characterized by a peculiar attitude of enmity against God. If that is right or wrong we shall see in a later chapter. Here I shall content myself with remarking that in al-Baiḍāwī's opinion *fāsiq* is substantially the same as *kāfir*; only, *fāsiq* is a particularly obstinate type of *kāfir* (*al-mutamarrid fī al-kufr*).

(4) As a special sub-class of (3) I should like to mention fourthly the case in which the semantic structure of an obscure word *X* is cleared up in terms of its negative form, *not-X*. The attempt, it may be argued, at explaining the meaning of *X* in terms of its negation is mostly doomed to failure; it does not appear in fact to contribute much towards furthering our knowledge about *X* itself, for *not-X* may be logically anything whatsoever outside *X*. Fortunately, however, this does not apply to those cases where the field of reference is narrowly limited, that is, where the

number of the possible referents is not very great. When the topic for discussion is a kind of flower which can either be red or blue, the very fact of being told that a particular specimen is not-red is enough to give the hearer much positive information about it. And this is almost always true of moral vocabulary in any language. In point of fact, in the limited field of reference of moral evaluation, knowledge about *not-X* tends to prove a very effective means of determining the semantic category of *X* itself. To know what types of conduct are generally referred to by the expression 'This is not good,' is as much important for the semanticist as to know what types of conduct are generally called 'good'.

The verb *istakbara* is one of the most important terms of negative evaluation in the Koran. Roughly it means 'to be big with pride', 'act haughtily and scornfully', and is used to refer to a characteristic feature of the *kāfir* 'disbeliever'. In the following example this verb appears in its negative form and describes from behind, so to speak, the conduct of one who behaves 'haughtily'.

Only those believe in Our signs [i. e. revelations] who, when they are reminded of them, fall down prostrate and celebrate loudly the praise of their Lord, and never get puffed up with pride.

(XXXII, 15)

What line of conduct do 'those who are *not* haughty' adopt? How do they actually behave when they find themselves face to face with divine signs? To know something positive and concrete about this is to know many things about the nature of that special kind of haughtiness which is designated by the word *istakbara*.

(5) We call a 'semantic field' any set of patterned semantic relations between certain words of a language. A very simple example of this is provided in English by the peculiar relationship holding between 'wind' and 'to blow'. In every language we encounter such semantic 'clusters' of words. A word rarely stands aloof from others and maintains its existence all alone; on the contrary, words manifest everywhere a very marked tendency to combine with certain other words in the contexts of occurrence. Every word has, as it were, its own choice of companions, so much so that the entire vocabulary of a language forms an extremely tangled web of semantic groupings. To disentangle it constitutes one of the important tasks of a semanticist. So, from his standpoint, any passage is semantically significant that contributes in some way or other towards determining the bounds of a field of meaning. Thus in the Koran the verb *iftarā[y]* ('to invent', 'forge') most frequently takes as its grammatical 'object' the noun *kadhīb* (a 'lie'), thus forming a well-nigh inseparable group. To this group comes to join the word *zālim* whose basic meaning I have discussed earlier. In fact the expression 'Who does more wrong — or, who is more unjust — (*aẓlam*) than he who forges (*iftarā[y]*) against

God a lie (*kadhīb*)?' is one of the set phrases of our Scripture. We can establish in this way that the three words *iftarā[y]* — *kadhīb* — *zālim* form in the Koran a peculiar group of combination, a semantic field in the sense just expounded.

(6) Very often the rhetorical device of parallelism reveals the existence of a semantic relationship between two or more words. It is widely known that in Biblical Hebrew and particularly in Classical Chinese, parallelism in poetic style furnishes not infrequently the key to the meanings of many words which would otherwise remain obscure. This is by no means the case to the same degree in the Koran. And yet there are a number of passages where parallelism helps to bring out a particular aspect of some semantic field. In Surah XXIX, for instance, we see the following two sentences appearing side by side.

And none denies Our signs save the *kāfir*. (v. 46)

And none denies Our signs save the *zālim*. (v. 48)

The parallelism of construction is in itself ample proof of the fact that *kāfir* ('misbeliever') and *zālim* ('wrong-doer') are semantic equals one of another in so far at least as the act of refusing to believe in divine signs is concerned. To this group of *kāfir* and *zālim* we can add one more member — *fāsiq* — if we happen to take notice of another instance of parallelism which is found in Surah V.

Whoso judges not by that which God has sent down : such are *kāfir*.  
(v. 48)

Whoso judges not by that which God has sent down : such are *zālim*.  
(v. 49)

Whoso judges not by that which God has sent down : such are *fāsiq*.  
(v. 51)

Here the three words *kāfir*, *zālim*, and *fāsiq*, which must by now be all familiar to the reader, are put semantically on a par with one another in respect to the act of giving judgment according to what God has revealed. Thus it will be evident that these words define a specific phase of a wider semantic field, that of 'unbelief', whose fundamental features will occupy us in a later chapter.

(7) As one might expect, all the key ethical terms in the Koran are generally used in contexts of deep religious import. Sometimes, however, we find even within the bounds of the Koran some of the ethical terms used in non-religious contexts, thus revealing the purely secular aspects of their meanings. These cases naturally furnish the semanticist with extremely valuable material for advancing his studies in the semantic structure of the words concerned. In point of fact we



have already seen an example of this in the process of analyzing the word *jāhil*. (See the first example taken from Surah XII, p. 27). Generally speaking the Surah XII — the 'Chapter of Joseph' — is semantically of particular interest in that it provides us with many good examples of this kind of secular use of words. I shall give here another example from another Surah. The word in question is again *kāfir*.

And he said, 'Did we not bring thee up amongst us as a child?  
And didst thou not dwell amongst us for many years of thy life?  
And yet thou didst do the deed which thou didst. Thou art of the  
ungrateful (*kāfirina*)!' (XXVI, 17-18)

This is said by Pharaoh to Moses — i. e. in a patently non-religious context of meaning — when the latter has slayed an Egyptian subject of the former. Nothing indeed throws such a clear light on the basic element of 'ingratitude' on which, as we saw earlier, the whole semantic category of the root *KFR* is founded.

## Chapter V

### THE FUNDAMENTAL MORAL ATTITUDE OF MUHAMMAD (I)

#### — The Pessimistic Conception of Earthly Life —

The purpose of this and the following chapters is to give an account of the general spiritual background against which the inner drama of Muhammad was unfolded and to bring out thereby the truly characteristic features of the principle that underlies all the ethical teachings of the Koran. It is desirable that this should be examined with some thoroughness at this stage in order that we might be able to view our problems in their proper historic perspective.

Perhaps the most conspicuous point to note in the process of the development of moral ideas in ancient Arabia is the fact that Muhammad proclaimed a morality that was based on a definite theoretical principle. This is to say that the rules of conduct and the standards of evaluation he enjoined upon the believers were capable of a rational justification in the sense that they were all liable to be explained in terms of some higher principles, albeit of course within the strict bounds of a monotheistic belief. To be sure, these principles may also be said to be in the last analysis irrational inasmuch as they are based, not on Reason, but on Belief, but they are not so in the sense that they resist all attempt of theoretical justification. So far as our knowledge from historical records goes this was indeed an unprecedented event among the Arabs of the Peninsula. For the first time in history, it seems, they were given a reliable theoretical standard and a body of practical rules by which to distinguish between right and wrong, between what is good to do and what is bad.

By this I should not be taken as wishing to maintain that in pre-Islamic times there was no distinction known between 'good' and 'bad', or 'right' and 'wrong'. On the contrary, a careful perusal of a document like the famous 'Book of Songs' (*Kitāb al-Aghāni*) will at once convince anyone that the pagan Arabs were in reality even richly endowed with an acute sense of morality. Even the so-called 'free children of the desert' had their own meticulous rules of conduct, by the standard of which any action, whether personal or tribal, could be judged to be right or wrong, good or bad, as the case may be. Only their 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' lacked a consistent, theoretical basis. They could hardly be justified except by a useless tautology of the type 'X is good because it is good'. Besides, these ethical properties were as a matter of actual fact often quite powerless to regulate the conduct of man in time of crisis when tribal interest was at stake, as the well-known maxim of the desert bears witness: 'Help your brother (i. e. fellow-tribesman) whether he is being wronged or wronging others'.

The ultimate and sole principle — if 'principle' it is — of moral judgment among them was an essentially irrational one based on tribal tradition. The only form of argumentation they could, and were in fact willing to use in ethical matters was this: *X* is good (or right) because we found our fathers and forefathers doing it.

When it is said to them [i. e. the pagans], 'Follow that which God has sent, 'they reply, 'Nay, we will follow what we found our ancestors doing.' What, even if their ancestors were all ignorant folk erring away from the true path? (Surah II, 165 and *passim*).

They [i. e. pagans] argue, 'Lo! we found our ancestors holding fast to a creed, and we are guided by their footprints'. Just in the same way We never sent before thee [Muhammad] any warner to any city, but that the people thereof who lived in luxury said, 'we found our ancestors holding fast to a creed, and we are following their footprints.' Ask them, 'What, even if I bring you what will give you better guidance than that you found your ancestors clinging to?' But they will only say, 'Nay, we in what you were sent with do disbelieve!' (XLIII, 20-23)

Now this type of argumentation naturally implies on its negative side that everything is bad (or wrong) in their eyes, that would involve in any respect a break with the existing social order, that, in other words, would shake and damage in however slight a manner the prestige of the customs inherited from their tribal ancestors. And such was precisely the nature of the moral reform which Muhammad inaugurated. The principle of morality which he so energetically championed had its origin in his glowing belief in the one and only God, in whose eye all the customs and traditions of the tribes could never be anything more than insignificant worldly affairs having nothing 'sacred' about them. It was only natural that this thought led Muhammad to a radical break with the very fundamental assumptions underlying the moral ideas of the pagan Arabs.

From among the various features that characterize the spirit of the age of Jahiliyyah, I would like to draw attention to the two following as being of particular relevance to the purpose of this chapter: its worldliness and tribalism.

The sober realism characterizing in a very peculiar way the Bedouin world-view is now well-known among those who are interested in the nature of Arab culture. It is connected most intimately with the dry climate of the land. Indeed, it has something which evokes in our minds the vivid touch of the arid sands of the desert. At all events it is a fact that a strange lack of imagination has stamped

its mark on everything that may be recognized as purely Arabic. To this type of unimaginative and realistic mind this present world with a myriad of its colors and forms is the only world that exists. Nothing is more removed from it than a belief in eternal life, the life to come. There can be no existence beyond the limits of this world.

They assert, 'There is our life in this present world; we die, we live, and naught destroys us but Fate.' (XLV, 23)

They assert, 'There is only our life in this present world; we shall never be raised.' (VI, 29)

Here the monotheism of Muhammad came inevitably into a serious conflict with the old pagan conception of existence. The divine message he brought to his countrymen about the resurrection and the world to come provoked everywhere scorn and derision.

They say, 'What, when we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we then be possibly raised? A promise like this we and our ancestors have been given before. These are all mere fantastic old tales.' (XXIII, 84-85)

The *kāfir* say, 'This is indeed a wondrous thing! What? when we are dead and have become dust? That would indeed be a long way to return!' (L, 2-3)

The *kāfir* say, 'Hey! Shall we show you a [strange] fellow who will assure you that, after you have been utterly torn pieces, you shall then be created anew?' (XXXIV, 7)

To be sure, even the pagan Bedouin knew and made much use of the word *khulūd* meaning like 'eternity' or 'eternal existence'. but, alas, to their realistic — all too realistic — minds that could hardly reach beyond the horizon of the immediately present; *khulūd* should also be something of this world. The 'eternity' of which there is much talk in pre-Islamic poetry, and which undoubtedly constituted one of the most serious human problems of the day among the pagan Arabs, meant primarily an eternal life on this very earth. A glance at the literary works they left makes it abundantly clear that they were aware that all the treasures amassed and all the deeds done would be ultimately meaningless and vain if there could not be found something which would confer immortality to the whole life of this world. Some such principle of immortality, *mukhlid* — lit. an 'eternilizer'

—they sought for everywhere. But it was of course so much labor lost. With biting sarcasm the Koran speaks of 'everyone.....who gathers wealth and counts it over as if his wealth could eternalize him' (CIV, 1-3). And the poet al-A'shā says 'Never, never think that riches can make their possessor immortal.'

It will be highly interesting to notice that this bitter consciousness of the absolute impossibility of finding eternity in this world was at once the final dead-end into which heathenism drove itself and the very starting point from which Islam took its ascending course. Indeed, Jahiliyyah and Islam unite on the recognition of the evanescence of human life. The dark mood of pessimism and despair arising from the consciousness of the essential vanity of life is common to both pre-Islamic poetry and the Surahs of the Sacred Book. Every reader of the Koran knows that this is a theme of incessant recurrence on the lips of Muhammad.

The life of this present world is naught but a play and a pastime  
(Surah XLVII, 38)

Know that the life of this present world is naught but a play and pastime, an outward show, and vainglory among you, and a rivalry in wealth and children. All this is like vegetation after rain, whose growth rejoices the *kāfir*; then it withers away and thou seest it become sere and yellow; then it becomes straw.....Thus the life of this world is but an illusion of joy. (LVII, 19-20)

This pessimistic conception of earthly life has nothing in itself to differentiate it from that expressed by the poets. Throughout the whole of pre-Islamic poetry there runs exactly the same note of pessimism. It is, we might say, the natural basic mood of the literature of the Jahiliyyah. Their works resound with bitter cries of despair at the emptiness of human life. Thus, to give one typical example out a number, 'Abīd b. al-Abras says (No. IX, in Charles Lyall's insuperable translation):

I pondered on thoughts of my people, the kind ones who dwelt at Malhub, and my heart was sore for them, overwhelmed with sorrow; (1)

And as remembrance filled me, the tears streamed ceaselessly like a water-runnel watering the seed-plots of one who has come to decay. (3)

Yea, many the tent from whose chambers the scent of musk floated

forth, have I entered, mayhap in secret, mayhap as an open wooer; (4)

And many the songstress whose voice the wine had rendered hoarse, who sings to the strings stretched over a hollow curved lyre, (5)

Have I listened to with companions, all men of noble race, who count themselves bound without stint to all seeking help. (6)

And now all these things are gone, and I am left to mourn—nay, what man on earth is there whose hopes are never belied? (8)

Thou seest a man ever yearn and pine for length of life: but what is long life's sum but a burden of grief and pain? (16)

(*Diwān*, ed. and tr. By Charles Lyall, P. 31)

In the poem No. I of the *Diwan* the same old poet, after giving a detailed picture of the desolation that has spread over the place of his youthful memories goes on to moralize on the vanity of all earthly things and concludes: 'All that is pleasant must be snatched away, and every one that gathers spoil is spoiled in turn (14); Men as long as he lives is a self-deceiver: length of life is but increase of trouble (24).' (*ibid.* p. 19)

Thus in the recognition of the vanity, emptiness, and ephemerality of earthly life Islam and Jahiliyyah evidently stand on a common ground. And yet the conclusions they draw from this are poles apart. For the Jahiliyyah, as I noted above, did not and would not know anything beyond the world of present existence, whereas Islam was a religion that was precisely founded on a glowing belief in the life to come. The pivotal point of Muhammad's message lies decidedly and uniquely in the hereafter. And once we recognize, and believe in, the existence of the world to come, failure in the attempt at seeking out *khulūd* ('eternity') in this world need no more drive us into the depths of despair. So the *khulūd* which presented such an awful, insoluble problem to the men of the Jahiliyyah, is now transposed without any difficulty to somewhere beyond the horizon of existence.

Nay, but you prefer the life of the present world, when in reality the world to come is far superior and everlasting. (LXXXVII, 16-17)

This world is transitory and vain, Islam teaches, so you must never count upon it; if you really desire to obtain immortality and enjoy eternal bliss you should at once adopt the principle of otherworldliness. All is vain in this world, the Jahiliyyah preaches, and nothing is to be found beyond it, so you must enjoy your

ephemeral life to the utmost limit of its capacity. Hedonism is the only possible conclusion for the worldly-minded people of the Jahiliyyah. The following two verses from the famous Ode of Ṭarafah reveal better than anything else the relation that existed in their minds between the impossibility of seeking out *khulūd* in this world and the principle of hedonism.

Well now, thou who censurest me because I attend the turmoils of war and because I cease not to pursue pleasures, canst thou then eternalize my existence? But since thou art unable to defend me from death, pray allow me to forestall it with what wealth I possess. (Ṭarafah, *Mu'allaqah*, 56-57, Aug. Arnold's edition, p. 54).

Pre-Islamic poetry is studded with hymns of voluptuous pleasures and enjoyments. In another passage (v. 46-51) of the Ode just mentioned the poet Ṭarafah says:

Seek me in the assembly of my people, and you will find me there.  
Hunt me in the taverns, and you will surely capture me there. (46)

Come to me in early morning, I shall fill you a cup of wine to the brim. If you decline, then decline as you like and be of good cheer. (47)

My boon companions are youths white as stars. And at eventide a singing-girl comes to us in robes striped and saffron-colored. (49)

Wide is the opening at her bosoms, delicately soft her nakedness  
When the fingers of my companions touch it and caress. (50)

When we say, 'Pray let us hear a song,' she begins gently to sing, with a voluptuous languidness, in a voice subdued. (51)

I would like to mention here the habit of winebibbing in the heathen period, as something which shows particularly well to what extent this principle of *carpe diem* exercised an active influence on the moral phase of the Jahili life.

It is a well-known fact that for the men of the Jahiliyyah wine was a source of highest pleasure. It was in their eyes one of the supreme gifts of fortune. The men of the Jahiliyyah were mostly winebibbers; they indulged in it habitually; they made it even their real boast and a point of honor to be able to indulge themselves freely with wine, for that was considered an unmistakable evidence of a 'generous nature' or 'nobleness' (*karam*), which constituted one of the personal virtues most highly prized by the Arabs in pagan days.

I am *karīm*, one who remains soaked in drink all his life. If we die tomorrow you will know which of us is the thirsty fellow.  
(Ṭarafah, *Mu'allaqah*, (63, p. 56)

Great was the number of those who ruined themselves by dissipation on account of wine, for, as 'Abīd says in one of his poems (VIII, 3). 'High was the price of wine, and great was the gain of the merchants'. In Poem No. VII (v. 17-18) he also says:

We bid up the price of all old wine,  
strong and fragrant, whiles we are sober;  
And we hold of no account, in pursuit of its delights,  
The mass of our inherited wealth, when we are drunken.  
(Tr. by Charles Lyall)

And Labīd b. Rabi'ah, another famous poet of the Jahiliyyah who lived long enough to die as a Muslim, had chanted in his springtide days the praises of the delight of wine-drinking. Here is a passage from his greatest Ode *Mu'allaqah*, in which he addresses his sweetheart Nawār (v. 57-61).

Ah, thou hast no idea how many serene nights of joyous merry-making and mirthful cheer,  
I have passed in convivial gatherings; how I have frequented the hoisted flag of the wine-merchant when the price of wine was dear;  
How I purchase wine at a high price in skin bags old and black, or, sometimes, in jugs smeared with pitch, whose seals I break;  
How I take pleasure in quaffing pure wine in the morn, holding close a girl while her nimble fingers touch the strings of her lute;  
How often I rise before the cock to take my own morning draught and to take a second draught when the sleepers do awake.

Ṭarafah, to whom reference has been repeatedly made, was a representative man of this type. In v. 53-54 of the above-quoted great Ode, he describes the hapless fate which has put an end to all his enjoyments;

Thus I went on drinking wine, and pursuing the pleasures of life,  
selling, dissipating both my own earnings and my patrimony,  
Until at last the whole tribe deserted me, and here I am left all alone like a dirty mangy camel.

According to an old tradition, the famous poet al-A'shā set out for Muhammad

with a firm intention to become a Muslim. On his way a pagan friend met him and asked him what was the matter. The poet told him that he was going to the Prophet to accept Islam. On being told that Islam prohibited fornication, he declared that it did not matter to him at all. When, however, his friend said, 'Ah, but do you know that Muhammad prohibits wine?' he said, 'That is a thing I cannot give up so easily. Well, in that case I will go back and drink heavily for a whole year and after that return and accept Islam'. So he went, and died in the very year, so that he never came back to the Prophet. (Ibn Ishāq *op. cit.* I, 256).

Now it was precisely in the midst of such a thoughtless generation that Muhammad arose to proclaim the new belief in the future life and the final judgment. He saw around him nothing but levity, worldliness, and pleasure-seeking.

They only pursue pleasures of the life of this present world, when, in reality, the whole life of this world is naught but transient enjoyment compared with the future life. (Surah XIII, 26)

The life of this world is naught but a play and a pastime; surely the next abode is better far for those who are godfearing. What, have you then no sense? (VI, 32)

For the godless and frivolous generation whom this world's life has completely deceived, it is, on the contrary, religion that is but a play and a pastime (VI, 69, VIII, 48). The determining mood of the spiritual situation of the Jahiliyyah, is—at least in the mind of Muhammad—that of jovity and complete indifference to the serious matters of religion. At these careless people who are now laughing, jesting, and playing Muhammad throws the 'good tidings' of the approaching torments of Hell. The calamitous Day of Judgment is threateningly near. And on that day the godless will have to pay dear for their thoughtlessness in this world.

On the day when those who disbelieve (*KFR*) shall be exposed to the Fire [of Hell]: 'you dissipated your good things in your earthly life and you enjoyed them to the full; wherefore this day you are rewarded with the torment of ignominy, for that you were big with pride in the earth without the right, and also for that you indulged in immorality and a dissolute life. (XLVI, 19)

Lo! This is a man who once lived among his family joyfully. Verily it never occurred to him that he should return to God. (LXXXIV, 13-14)

In view of this state of affairs, the basic attitude of man in this present world should be, from Muhammad's point of view, not the desperate sort of hedonism

which we have just encountered among the pre-Islamic Arabs, but fear and absolute earnestness. The fear of God, a shuddering awe before the Lord of the Day of Judgment, must act as the determining motive of all conducts of the religious man, nay, rather it must determine the whole human existence itself. The proof of a man's being genuinely noble (*karīm*) of character and personality should not be sought in the direction of audacity in mundane affairs. The real *karīm* is not a man who dares to squander impulsively and thoughtlessly all the riches in his hand without stopping to think for a moment that he may be thereby driven to utter misery and ruin. The real *karīm* is he who lives with great moral earnestness, being ever conscious of the approaching day of the horrible catastrophe.

It is extremely significant that the peculiar nature of Islamic faith lent a characteristic stamp to the semantic category of *karīm*. Here we have an interesting case of an important term of moral evaluation in ancient Arabia being given an entirely new meaning, that of 'fear'. This means, in other words, a complete inner transformation of the ethical value of man.

Surely the noblest [*akram*, the superlative form of *karīm*] of you all in the sight of God is one who is feeling the greatest fear among you. Verily God knows everything, He is aware of everything. (XLIX, 13)

We can hardly overemphasize the revolutionary nature of this attempt of semantic re-evaluation applied to an old moral word which was itself 'honorable' and 'noble', so to speak. Already in the day of the Jahiliyyah *karīm* was a word whose meaning covered an extremely wide range. But no one before Muhammad could have thought of attaching the element of 'fear' to its semantic constitution. For, as we shall see, the emotion of fear represented in the eyes of the Jahilis the most despicable quality possible in man. In the days when reckless audacity and bravery were counted among the highest virtues, it would never have occurred to anyone to understand the word *karīm* in terms of something suggesting timidity and cowardice. It would have made practically no difference whether the object of the 'trembling fear' be God or a human enemy. Even women gave a coward the cold shoulder. Thus Hind, daughter of 'Utbah, who, together with other women of the tribe accompanied the troops of her tribe, rose up when they came within sight of the enemy, took a tambourine, and beating it behind the men to stir them up, sang:

Advance, advance, and we will embrace you  
spreading soft rugs beneath you;  
But if you prove cowards, we will  
abandon you, and will care for you no more.

(Ibn Ishāq, II, 562)



Of course it should be kept in mind here that the emotion of 'fear' meant for Muhammad far more than being afraid of punishment. As Tor Andrae pointed out years ago (*Mohammed, Sein Leben und Sein Glaube* 1932, Ch. III), the deep ethico-religious value of the fear of God, the Lord of the Day of Judgment, is largely due to the fact that it cannot but arouse in the mind of the believer a clear consciousness of the tremendous seriousness of life and thus incite him to moral earnestness and responsibility. Act always as if you were standing at this very moment before the Divine presence, before the judgementseat of Allah on the Day of the great Reckoning—this was the first of the cardinal rules of conduct which Muhammad laid down in the earliest period of his prophetic career. But all this would be utterly impossible and absurd where there was no faith in the world to come. Fear could only become a principle of religion and ethics on the basis of a monotheistic belief such as was proclaimed by Muhammad. For further details of the problems of 'fear' and *karīm*, I would refer the reader to the next chapter where 'semantic transpositions' of the ethical terms will specifically be discussed.

## Chapter VI

## THE FUNDAMENTAL MORAL ATTITUDE OF MUHAMMAD (II)

## —The Spirit of Tribal Solidarity—

We shall turn next to the problem of tribalism. We may begin by remarking that the social structure of pre-Islamic Arabia was essentially tribal. It has often been pointed out by various writers on Arabia that the life-blood of pagan ethics was the feeling of solidarity existing between all the members of the tribe. The tribe, or its sub-class clan, was for the pre-Islamic Arabs not only the sole unit and basis of social life; but it represented first and foremost the highest principle of conduct, evolving a comprehensive pattern for the whole of life, both individual and public alike. Tribal spirit was no doubt the fountainhead of all cardinal moral ideas on which Arab society was built. To respect the bond of kinship by blood more than anything else in the world, and to act for the glory of the tribe—this was by common consent a sacred duty imposed on every man, i. e. every individual member of the group.

Nothing expresses better and more tersely the deep, irrational nature of this sentiment of tribal connection than a verse of Duraid ibn Šimmaḥ which Nicholson cites in his *Literary History of the Arabs*, (p. 83): 'I am of Ghaziyyah: if she be in error, then I will err; And if Ghaziyyah: be guided right, I go right with her!' This illustrates remarkably well how tribal solidarity dictated the actions of the heathen Arab, and how he had to obey through foul and fair the categorical imperative of tribalism. As R. Dozy remarked (*Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne*, t. I p. 7), 'this limitless and unshakable attachment, which is called *'aṣabiyyah*, that a pagan Arab feels for his fellow-tribesmen, this absolute devotion to the interests, prosperity, glory, and honor of the community into which he was born and in which he will die—this not in any way a sentiment like our patriotism, which would appear to a fiery Bedouin too lukewarm. It is a violent and terrible passion. It is at the same time the first and most sacred duty of all duties; it is the real religion of the desert.' Even if there is some exaggeration in this last statement, yet it remains true that *'aṣabiyyah* was incomparably far stronger and more influential than the pagan religion of the desert, which never rose above the level of primitive polydemonism and which, by the time of Muhammad, was showing signs of degenerating more and more into sheer magic.

Of course, as a matter of actual fact, this rule of tribal solidarity, as every other rule of conduct, was sometimes transgressed. Sporadically there appeared, even in the desert, persons whose individuality was too strong and too marked to remain always loyal to the tribal cause. Such a person naturally tended to produce trouble

by his reckless deeds inside and outside the tribe and might even involve his tribal 'brothers' into the bloodiest kind of warfare, for in pagan days a man's whole tribe or clan had to assume the responsibility for his disgraceful doings. In such a case the only way open to the tribe for evading all responsibility for him is to proclaim him as having been formally disowned, whereby he becomes an 'outlaw' (*khalī*). A large number of such homeless outlaws appear to have been roaming the desert in the days of the Jahiliyyah. Here is a song of such vagabondage, a poem by 'Urwah ibn al-'Absi:

God's curse on the poor vagabond who under cover of night  
 roams about slaughter-places in search of heads of bones.  
 At even-tide he lies down exhausted, to awake the morrow still drowsy,  
 shaking off wearily the gravel from his side covered with dust.  
 But this wretched vagabond—the breadth of his face glows  
 like the flame of a shooting star blazing in the darkness.  
 Towering over the neighborhood, striking his enemies with horror,  
 All people curse him between the tents, as losers curse their unlucky lot.  
 Even when they live far from his haunts, they never relax their guard  
 against his coming nigh, as a family looking out for one whom they love.  
 (*al-Ḥamāsah*, I, Cairo ed. 1295 A. H., p. 219-220)

If we can judge from the poets, it even did happen not infrequently that actual experience taught these tribesmen a better wisdom: Often, says a poet, the roaming stranger (*nāzih*) proves a near friend, and the nearest kinsman is cut off to become a stranger ('Abid. b. al-Abras, *Diwān* I, 22).

But taken all in all, these cases were all anomalies and were certainly in a small minority. And the life of these homeless outlaws was, as might be expected in desert conditions, always on the brink of death either from natural causes or by the hand of human enemy. For it is almost a commonplace that, without a high degree of solidarity, there can be hardly any hope of facing with success the fierce struggle for survival under the climatic and social conditions of the desert. Even those strangers who were formally adopted among a tribe, and who consequently were in a position far better than the outlaws, were often hard put to it only because they were 'outsiders.' Such an adopted member of the tribe was called *zanīm*. It is extremely significant in this connection that this word developed a very marked secondary meaning of 'base,' 'ignoble,' and 'a man of an evil character.' So much so that Ibn Ishāq felt himself obliged to make a particular remark, concerning a passage from the Koran (Surah LXVIII, 10-13) where this word appears, to the effect that *zanīm* here is not used in the sense of a man of ignoble birth (*li-'aibin fī nasabihī*), because it is not for God to insult the pedigree of anyone, but it is used in its original sense of a stranger adopted among a people. As pagan

poet al-Khaṭīm al-Tamīmī said, a *zanīm* was a useless, superfluous addition to the body of the tribe, and anyone who dared to exhibit preference for such an 'addition' over his kinsmen by blood was sure to arouse a furious storm of reproach in the tribe. It was from exactly the same motive that those of the Arab tribes in Medina, who fervently took the side of Muhammad incurred stinging reproaches from the opposite camp. This feeling of indignation has found a genuine expression in the following verses of 'Asmā b. Marwān (Ibn Ishāq, II, 995):

O how I despise you, sons of Mālik and an-Nabit,  
 and you, tribes of 'Auf and sons of Khazraj!  
 You have obeyed an outsider coming from afar,  
 belonging not to Murād nor to Madhḥij!

Thus the social structure of the Jahiliyyah was essentially tribal in the sense that the ideal of the tribe was the Alpha and Omega of human existence. The bond of kinship by blood, the burning sense of honor born from the all-importance of blood relation, which required that a man should take the side of his tribal brothers regardless of whether they be right or wrong, love of one's own tribe, black and bitter scorn of the outsiders—these furnished the final yardsticks by which people of the Jahiliyyah measured personal value. There appears to have been practically no supra-tribal standard of good in pagan days:

It is of supreme importance for the right estimation of Muhammad's religious movement to realize that it was just in such circumstance that he declared the definite superiority of religious relationship over the ties of blood. His was indeed a daring attempt to establish an entirely new community on the basis of a common faith in the one and only God, whose members, as Gustave Grunebaum has put it, were kin by faith rather than by blood. According to Grunebaum (*Islam*, p. 31), the most effective factor in attracting men to Islam was, apart from the religious truths contained in the message of Muhammad, its ability to serve as a point of crystallization for a novel sociopolitical unity. But it had to overcome a huge amount of difficulties before it could begin to function as such a center of crystallization.

Abū Jahl, a sworn enemy of Muhammad, is reported to have described him once as 'one who more than anyone else has cut the bond of kinship by blood and wrought that which is scandalous.' And tribal bard of Meccan Quraish, al-Hārith ibn Hishām said after the battle of Badr in praise of those slain on the battle-field fighting against Muhammad and his allies:

They were slain as noble warriors, they did not sell their tribe  
 to side with aliens who are no kith and kin of theirs.  
 But you sold your own tribe when Ghassān became your true friends  
 in place of us [Quraish]; what a scandalous act it was!

An act of treason, a glaring crime, a cutting of the ties of kinship!  
Your injustice all men endowed with reason will perceive.

(Ibn Ishāq, I, 519)

It is interesting to notice that *politically* Muhammad himself profited to not a slight extent from the existence of the rule of tribal solidarity even in the city community of Mecca, particularly during the first years of his prophetic activity. For, as Montgomery Watt has pointed out in his admirable work on *Muhammad at Mecca* (I, 3), it was largely due to the fervor of 'aṣabiyyah shown by the powerful subdivision of Quraish, Banū Hāshim, who were there ready to protect him at any moment, that he could continue preaching in Mecca despite the indignation against him of the leading circles of Quraish. The Prophet, according to orthodox tradition, belonged by birth to this illustrious family of Mecca, being one of the grandsons of Hāshim.

And yet, Muhammad made a daring attempt to abolish the principle of tribal solidarity and to replace it by that of monotheistic faith which would make possible a new organization of society with a wholly ritualized way of life as a manifestation of the eternal order here on the earth. It is clear that this revolution — for 'revolution' it certainly was — was prompted at first by a purely religious motive, though as time went on the principle of kinship by faith began to assume more and more a rich political coloring.

But that as it may, it is a fact that Muhammad ordained a new type of brotherhood based on faith between all the members of his community and declared that henceforward this brotherhood was to be regarded closer and stronger than the bond of kinship by blood. For the purpose of this study it is particularly important to remark that the motive of Muhammad's abrogation of the age-old rule of 'aṣabiyyah may be traced ultimately to his terrifying eschatological vision of the Last Day. For on that day, all blood relationships that are now so much prized, will turn utterly meaningless and useless.

But when the trumpet-sound [ushering in the Judgment] shall come,  
on the day when a man shall flee from his brother, his mother,  
his father, his spouse, and his sons, every man among them on  
that day shall have no time to care for others. (LXXX, 33-37)

Thou shalt never find a people who believe in God and the Last day  
loving anyone who opposes God and His Apostle, even though it  
be their own fathers, their sons, their brothers, or their fellow-  
tribesmen. (LVIII, 22)

It is not for the Prophet and those who believe to ask pardon for

the polytheists, even though they be the nearest in blood, now that  
it has been made clear to them that these are destined for Hell.  
Abraham did ask pardon for his father, but that was only because  
he had to fulfil a promise he had made. So once it became clear  
to him that he [i. e. his father] was an enemy of God, he formally  
declared that he had nothing to do with the latter's doing.

(IX, 114-115)

However, even Muhammad could not displace at one stroke the standard of tribal ethics based on the natural tie of the kindred, and age-old tribal feuds were carried over far into the ages after the promulgation of Islam. We saw in the last chapter how the rival tribes of Aus and Khazraj in Medina lived in a precarious sort of unity after they had become friends and brothers by faith under Muhammad.

Abū Qais, a well-known ascetic who adopted Islam after the Apostle migrated to Medina, said:

Sever not, my sons, the ties of kinship.

Be magnanimous to your kindred though they be narrow of mind.

(Ibn Ishāq, I, 347)

The feeling of tribal solidarity tended to control a man's actions towards his kinsmen even when they joined the banner of his enemy, a phenomenon that occurred very frequently in Arabia after the rise of Islam. Speaking of the Prophet's companions who had fled from Mecca for refuge with the king of Abyssinia, and trying to calm down an angry friend who was going to resort to violent measure in order to 'uproot all these fellows,' a 'godfearing' person said, 'Don't do such a thing. They are related to us by blood even though they are now on the opposite side.' (*ibid*, I, 220). On the day of Uhud, 'Alī who was in charge of the standard of the Muslims and Abū Sa'd who carried the banner of the pagans fought in single combat and the former smote the latter down on the ground. But he refrained from giving him the finishing stroke. When asked later why he did not do so, he replied, 'The bond of blood kinship it was that made me faint-hearted at the last moment.' (*ibid*, II, 547 according to Ibn Hishām).

So Muhammad, when he migrated to Medina, tried at first to establish, in accordance with his newly proclaimed principle, a supertribal unity of all believers, and declared that the Muhājirīn (i. e. those who had shared from the very beginning in his hardship and fled with him from Mecca) and the Anṣār (i. e. those who newly became Muslims in Medina) should regard themselves as 'brothers' in religion, and that this brotherhood should abrogate all the ancient customs and rules of blood kinship. Believers should be friends of believers, and disbelievers of disbelievers, regardless of all relationships by blood and ancestry; if not, 'there would arise in

the land an irreparable moral corruption.' For all this, tribal feuds were carried on before his very eyes as in pagan days, if not of course to the same extent, and in the course of time he had to make some concessions. Surah XXXIII, 6 of the Koran is recognized by the old commentators as a record of a concession of this kind.

The Prophet is closer to the believers than their selves, and his wives are their mothers. But those who have kinship by blood are closer to one another in the Book of God than the believers [who are not kindred] and the Muhājirīn. Nevertheless you have to behave with kindness towards your companions.

The key to this passage seems to lie in the denotatum of the phrase 'the Book of God'. The commentators are in agreement that it refers to the right of inheritance. If this interpretation is admitted, then the meaning of the passage as a whole would amount to this: those who are related by the bond of blood are closer to one another so far as inheritance is concerned. And this verse would naturally abrogate the rule of strict brotherhood between all Muslims, whether kindred or strangers. Thus we see in Islam — through the history of the development of Islam — old tribal interests often cutting across religious relationships.

On the other hand, Arabia in that age of transition exhibits certain remarkable features which point to the opposite direction as regards the spirit of conservative tribalism. There were, about the time of Muhammad, clear signs of a weakening of the tribal or clan kinship and a growing tendency to a certain individualism. Montgomery Watt in his above-mentioned book (p. 19, 25) has made a very interesting remark that the growing awareness of the problem of personal immortality — *khulūd* — which I have approached from another angle in the last chapter, marks the breakdown of what he has aptly called 'tribal humanism' as a vital religious force; for, he says, the problem of the cessation of a man is in the last analysis the problem of the ultimate destiny of the individual as distinguished from, and opposed to the subsistence of the tribe. He also argues that this growth of individualism at the cost of tribal spirit was probably fostered by the circumstances of commercial life in Mecca. In this center of mercantile life, he maintains, it was natural that financial and material interest fostered individualism and began to exercise a strong influence on the social life of the day as a new possible basis of community (p. 72). If these arguments are valid, we might perhaps safely say that there was then hovering in the air, so to speak, a presage of a new age with new ideals of life, and that Muhammad took this opportunity for creating a religio-political organization of society by providing a means of passage from 'tribal humanism' to 'individual humanism.'

I have given in the foregoing what might seem a rather lengthy description of

the tribal spirit in the Jahiliyyah. My ultimate purpose has been thereby to furnish an appropriate background which will bring out by contrast the truly characteristic features of the Islamic moral ideas. I shall begin with the problem of the locus of moral virtues. It will be clear that in a social pattern where the tribal ethos was the only possible principle of unity by which to preserve a balance and good order among the people, all the noble qualities were considered to reside not so much in the individual members of the tribe as in the tribe itself. We are now accustomed to think of moral virtues as personal qualities inherent in the individual. This was not the case with the pagan Arabs. For them moral virtues were rather precious communal possessions inherited from fathers and forefathers. A man's honor or glory (*majd*) always came to him as an inheritance within the tribe. He felt himself charged with the sacred duty to transmit it unharmed, or even greatly increased, to his posterity.

We inherited our glory from our fathers.

Lo!, it has grown in our hands to a lofty height.

(Muhāfir ibn Abī 'Amr, *apud* Ibn Ishāq I, 96)

In such a social system personal values cannot be thought of apart from the nobility of the tribe to which one belongs. Noble ancestry is the unmistakable warrant guaranteeing the excellence of a man. Hence it comes that the pagan poetry is full of boastings of the ancestral virtues of one's own tribe. Thus Abū Ṭālib says in praise of Quraish (*ibid*, I, 180):

If we are to value all men, you are a jewel,

You preserve people noble and excellent,

With an honorable lineage, with no stain of mixture.

The glorious deeds of the tribe are respectfully handed down by word of mouth from father to son, and as they are thus transmitted from generation to generation they go on increasing like a snowball. These from what is designated by the word *ḥasab*, which may approximately rendered by 'ancestral honor.' Every noble tribe has its own *ḥasab* to boast of. *Ḥasab* is the final yardstick by which the value of a tribe — and consequently the personal excellence of every member of the tribe — is measured. Viewed from a somewhat different standpoint the *ḥasab* may be said to represent the only possible guide to moral conduct in the tribal pattern of society. For every individual member of the tribe sees in the glorious *ḥasab* left by his fathers a body of the highest ideals, a perfect model of behavior to be imitated in all circumstances of life. It tends to govern all his actions, and conversely, all his actions are judged right or wrong by the unique standard it offers. Thus it constitutes for him an unwritten code of laws.

He belongs to a tribe whose fathers have laid down  
for them a way of life.  
Every folk has its own traditional way of life,  
every folk has its objects of imitation.

(Labīd, *Mu'allaqah*, v. 81, p.117)

A way of life or code of law of this kind, as the reverse side, so to speak, of ancestral honor, was called *sunnah*. We now see why *sunnah* was held in so high esteem in ancient Arabia, why there was even something 'sacred' about it.

That this peculiar pagan passion for *hasab* continued to exist with almost unabated vigor even in later years of Islam is shown by many occurrences. The most interesting of them all is perhaps the rise of Shu'ūbiyyah in the early Abbasid period. Here we see the old intertribal antagonism transformed into a grand-scale opposition between the Arabs and the non-Arabs among the Muslims. The Shu'ūbiyyah was a sect who claimed a complete equality of all Muslims, irrespective of race, nationality and lineage. Their contention, according to *Iqd al-Farīd* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, amounts to this: the Prophet forbade Muslims to boast about one's ancestors; and yet, the Arabs still do not cease to pride themselves on their noble lineage and keep on looking down upon the non-Arabs with the characteristic haughtiness of the Jahiliyyah; but when it comes to that, we can establish logically and factually that we have in reality better grounds for boasting.

The Shu'ūbiyyah could quote in support of this argument the famous words of the Prophet, which he is said to have uttered in his Farewell Pilgrimage: 'O men, verily God has eradicated from your minds the sense of honor and the inflated pride in ancestry, which are both peculiar to the people of the Jahiliyyah. You have all sprung from the common stock of Adam, and Adam sprang from dust.'

This point of basic importance for the right understanding of Muhammad's position in ethical matters. If he dared to deny all value to ancestral honor despite such a deep-rooted ardent attachment of the Arabian aristocracy for it, it was solely because he firmly believed that all this was groundless vainglory, an empty illusion created by the outward show of earthly world, and that it would never stand the divine test on the Day of Judgement. On that terrible day, when every person will be called out from the grave and will have to stand naked before the judgement-seat, nothing will count among his merits except his personal faith and his good works which he has done in the world from purely religious motives.

Whosoever desires honor [or glory, 'izzah] [should know that true]  
honor belongs wholly to God. To Him ascend good words; and  
all pious deeds, He lifts them up. (QXXV, II)

Reference was already made in another connection to Surah XLIX, 130 where

we read: 'Surely the noblest — the most *karīm* — of you all in the sight of God is one who is feeling the greatest fear among you,' and I pointed out the noteworthiness of this passage as an example of redefinition by Muhammad of one of the key ethical terms in Old Arabic. (See page 47). Now from the point of view of this chapter we may make another important observation concerning the same passage. It is this: Muhammad's position as represented by these words collides head-on with the old ideal of the Jahiliyyah in two points; namely, first, that it places the locus of personal qualities in the individual as distinguished from the tribe and that, secondly, it introduces an element of weakness or humbleness into the notion of virtue. The first point has been already discussed. So I shall turn to the problem of weakness or humbleness as an essential element of the Islamic idea of moral virtue. The problem has two different but closely related aspects; one is social, the other spiritual.

We have already seen that the principle of tribal solidarity among the pagan Arabs owed the greater part of its vital force and authority to the sentiment of pride arising from the consciousness of one's belonging to a noble stock. Noble blood in one's veins was the first necessary prerequisite of one's being capable to develop noble personal qualities. If tribal solidarity could work in the days of Jahiliyyah as the effective religion of the Arabs, it was after all a religion of the aristocracy. The weak and poor, the baseborn, people of no descent, the slaves — in a word, the proletariat were allowed to have no share in this religion.

Muhammad, on the contrary, stresses from the very outset the universal grace and goodness of Allah. The awful Lord of the Last Day is at the same time the most merciful and the most compassionate God, who makes no distinction at all between rich and poor, the powerful and the uninfluential. In the presence of this God, all men are equal, irrespective of the distinctions of rank and lineage. Nay, He even prefers the weak and insignificant to the arrogant aristocrats. 'O most Merciful', so Muhammad prays, 'Thou art indeed the Lord of the oppressed. Thou art my Lord!' (Ibn Ishāq, I 280). It is easy to see that this involves, on the part of the believers, the moral duty of treating the poor and weak with utmost tenderness. The Koran is replete with commands and injunctions that are immediate manifestations of this spirit.

All things God has given as spoils of war to His Apostle from the people of the cities belongs to God, and His Apostle, and the near kinsfolk, the orphans, the poor and wayfares, so that wealth should not become an exclusive possession of the rich of you. Whatever the Apostle gives you, take, and whatever he forbids you, abstain. And fear God. (LIX, 7)

Those who do not honor orphans and refuse even a small kindness to the poor



and needy are not simple niggards. The cause lies much deeper than that. The characteristic mercilessness of their attitude originates in their *kufir*, their lack of gratitude to God for His grace and goodness. They behave niggardly because they are at heart incorrigible *kāfirs*.

Hast thou observed him who cries lies to the Judgement? He it is that repels the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the poor. So woe to those who pray [i. e. as a matter of outward form as if they were Muslims] but are in truth heedless of their own prayers; woe to those who make a show [of belief] yet refuse to show kindness.  
(CVII, 1-7)

In the following passage such conducts of the *kāfir* are made more directly the object of a severe reprimand:

Nay, but you show not any tenderness to the orphan, you urge not the feeding of the poor. You devour the inheritance [of the defenceless] with unbounded greed; you love wealth with a blazing love.  
(LXXXIX, 18-21)

Muhammad, with his usual candidness, goes so far as to relate in the Koran how he himself was once severely rebuked by God for his merciless conduct towards a poor blind man. The Surah in which this event is related carries a significant title of 'Frowning'. One day, a certain blind man, Ibn Umm Maktūm by name, came to Muhammad while he was talking with some of the leading personalities of Quraish, and began to put questions importunately about the creeds of Islam. Muhammad, annoyed at the interruption, turned away from him with a frown. Immediately a divine revelation is sent down to reprimand him for his tendency towards doing despite in such a way to the insignificant men while being ready at all times to attend respectfully to the wealthy and powerful.

He [i. e. Muhammad] made a grimace and flatly turned his back, for that the blind man came to him. But who knows? Perchance he [i. e. the blind man] too may make a pure Muslim [lit. will purify himself], or may come to remember [i. e. be awakened religiously] and be profited by the reminder. But as for him who is rich and powerful, to him dost thou [Muhammad] attend [with care and respect, though at bottom thou art not concerned, whether he will purify himself or not. But as for him who comes to thee in earnest and in fear, to him thou payest no attention.

(LXXX, 1-10)

In a number of other passages God admonishes Muhammad in a more mild, and sometimes even coaxing tone not to despise and reject the poor ones; after all it is they, if anybody, that may turn out to be most receptive to the teaching of meekness and self-surrender.

Lose not thy patience with those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, craving His countenance. Let not thine eyes be turned away from these people, desiring the gorgeous pomp of this present world.  
(XVIII, 27)

In Surah XCIII, 6-11, God addresses His Apostle and tells him not to oppress orphans and drive away beggars mercilessly. The tone here, be it noted, is extremely intimate.

Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter?  
Did He not find thee erring, and guide thee?  
Did He not find thee poor, and give thee wealth?  
Therefore the orphan, oppress him not.  
Therefore the beggar, rate him not.

It is noteworthy that in this passage a very personal fact about Muhammad's unhappy childhood is particularly evoked to remind him that he has always been the object of His special care and protection, and that this is made the reason why Muhammad should act towards the poor and needy with kindness. Translated into more general terms, this would mean that man should show tenderness and mercifulness because Allah Himself is the merciful, gracious, and infinitely loving God. Human goodness is the counterpart — though of course it cannot be anything more than an incomparably poor and imperfect counterpart — of divine goodness. In Surah XXVIII, 77, it is expressly stated:

Be thou kind and good [*aḥsin* from *ḤSN*] even as God has been good to thee.

It is very important to keep this point in mind, because for the matter of sheltering weak ones and providing the needs of orphan children, the Jahiliyyah too could boast of having produced many examples of extravagant generosity, as we shall presently see in the following chapter. Outwardly, the Jahili mind shows signs of being even far more liberal and charitable than the Muslim mind. Only the underlying motives are completely different.

Thus it comes about that the element of weakness, meekness, or humbleness, as the human counterpart of the benevolence of God, is made the very pivotal point

of Islamic ethics. Most, though not all, of the recognized moral duties of Islam derive in fact from this pious benevolence. Kindness is enjoined upon the believers on every possible occasion. Kindness should be the governing principle of all human relations in society as well as in family. Thus one should be humble and tender towards one's parents, and treat them always well.

Thy Lord has decreed that you should not serve none save Him, and that you should be kind and good to parents, if one or both of them attain an advanced age in your house. Say not to them 'Fie!' neither rate them, but speak to them words of respect. Lower unto them the wing of humbleness out of tenderness, and say, 'My Lord, have mercy upon them even as they reared me when I was a little child.' (XVII, 24-25)

We have enjoined upon man kindness towards his parents. His mother bore him with pain, and with pain did she give birth to him; it took thirty months for his bearing and his weaning. (XLVI, 14)

The mitigating policy adopted by Muhammad towards the age-old custom of the blood-vengeance of paganism was another obvious manifestation of the same principle. It is well-known that blood-vengeance was a supreme law of the desert, connected most closely with the Arab idea of 'honor'. Persistence in seeking revenge was an essential constituent of the conception of *muruwah*, or the highest moral ideal of the Bedouin, of which I have given a summary explanation in an earlier chapter; it was regarded in the Jahiliyyah as an important 'virtue' of man. Nicholson has tried to give a vivid representation of the true Arab feeling of vengeance by saying that 'it was a tormenting thirst which nothing would quench except blood, a disease of honor which might be described as madness' (*op. cit.* p. 93). It was so deep-rooted in the soul of the pagan Arabs that even Muhammad could not extirpate the custom all at once. But he attempted at least to calm down this raging madness by imposing upon it some strict restrictions. Hence the ordinance that only the person of the culprit himself is liable to the justice of the vendetta; that only one life can be taken, a freeman for a freeman, a slave for a slave, and a woman for a woman, and that, moreover, it would be better for the kinsmen of the murdered man to accept a blood-wit and settle the matter in a peaceful way. (See Surah II, 173-174).

There is, something much more noteworthy with regard to the act of vengeance. In Islam, we see the locus of the right of taking vengeance quietly transposed from the human to the divine hands. In the days of the Jahiliyyah, bloody vengeance was always sought by a man upon a man; vengeance was carried out within the bounds of humanity, on the strictly human level. In Islam, the direction of vengeance

became vertical; or rather, a new vertical direction made its appearance and began to run across the horizontal line. God was declared to be the supreme Avenger of all evils and wrongs that were being done on the earth. It stands patent from a number of Koranic passage (cf. XV, 79; XXX, 46; XLIV, 15) that the chastisement of Hell was represented as the divine act of retaliation on an infinitely grand scale. And in Surah XIV, 48, and XXXIX, 38, Allah is called the mighty 'Lord of Vengeance' (*dhū intiqāmin*). Since, then, there is God who 'never wrongs anybody' and is 'aware of all that men do', and who promises to take vengeance on those who have done any wrong, what can be better policy for man to follow than to submit all these matters to Allah's divine will? Though in practice the problem of vengeance was still studded with all sorts of difficulties, theoretically at least the conclusion was clear and simple: here too, benevolence and love should be made the guiding principle of human conduct.

All this is another way of saying that the principle of *hilm* was adopted by Muhammad definitely as the central point of the Islamic moral system. In Chapter IV we have seen that *hilm* is an Arabic equivalent of the Greek *ataraxia*, a freedom of the soul from all violent passions, the virtue of reining one's passionate nature from being moved and stirred up on the smallest provocation.

The [true] servants of the Merciful God are they who walk on the earth quietly and gently; and who, when the *jāhil* address them, reply 'Peace!' (XXV, 64)

The demand to adopt the principle of *hilm* and to make every active endeavor to live up to its highest ideal must have been felt particularly harsh by the pagan Arabs born with an extremely passionate and irascible nature. So in fact this way of life is compared in the Koran to the most difficult place of ascent of a mountain-road, '*aqabah*'. But we are told at the same time that it is those who have overcome all its difficulties that are to become the 'companions of the Right' on the Last Day: the companions of the Right, that is, those who will be ranged on the right-hand side on the Day of Judgment to go to Paradise and enjoy its everlasting bliss, while the 'companions of the Left' are those destined for the eternal torment of Fire.

What is the meaning of the Steep Ascent? It is to set free slaves, or to give food on the day of famine to an orphan who is akin, or a poor man reduced to beggary. And then it is to become of those who believe and encourage each other to patience, and encourage each other to acts of kindness. (XC, 13-18)

So much for the social side of the problem of pious benevolence. Turning now to the second of its aspects as distinguished above, the spiritual, we may begin by

remarking that here again the principle of humbleness collides head-on with the unyielding spirit of the desert Arabs, the sense of honor, the fierce arrogance, that *ḥamiyyat al-jāhiliyyah* which, as we have seen in some detail in Chap. IV, is so characteristic of the Bedouin mind.

*Islam*, as its name itself suggests, insists first and foremost on the absolute necessity of humble submission to God. *Muslim* means literally a 'submitter', he who has submitted himself and surrendered his heart and mind to Allah's divine will. A total voluntary self-surrender is the basic characteristic and the first condition of Islamic piety. It need not surprise us if this aroused in a peculiar manner the 'pique of Jahiliyyah'. Humbleness, patience, trembling fear, avoidance of ostentation — all these cardinal virtues of a Muslim must have appeared to the mind of a truculent pagan Arab as nothing but manifestations of inborn baseness.

When it is said to such a man 'Fear God,' then the sense of honor ('*izzah* [i. e. *ḥamiyyat al-jāhiliyyah* as al-Baiḍāwī remarks]) takes him to sin. So Hell is enough for him. How evil a couch it will be!  
(II, 202)

We have already seen above how Muhammad made 'fear' *taqwā*[y] the very basic mood of his religion. The most fitting definition of the true believer is 'one who trembles in fear before God.' 'O men! fear your Lord!' (XXII, I). 'O you who believe! fear God. Let every soul look to what it has sent on for the morrow. And fear God. Verily, God is well aware of all you are doing'. (LIX, 18). And it is also said: 'The flesh and blood of the sacrificial offerings reach not God; it is fear only that reaches Him from you. (XXII, 38) It is easy to see that in these contexts 'fear' is almost synonymous with 'faith' or 'devotion'.

Another aspect of this basic mood of fear is represented by 'submission', the humble, servile submission to God, to which reference has just been made.

They assert, 'None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian.' This is nothing but their heart's desire. Say thou, 'Then bring your proof, if what you say is true.' Nay, but whosoever submits his face [i. e. his whole self] to God and shows kindness [to his neighbors], he shall have his reward from his Lord.  
(II, 105-106)

The same is true of the absolute reliance which any believer who is at all worthy of the name is expected to place upon the goodness of God. The attitude of maintaining unshakable reliance (*tawakkul*) whatever may happen is one of the fundamental properties of a true Muslim.

Say, 'Naught shall befall us save that which God has decreed for us. He is our Protector. Upon God let the believers rely'. (IX, 51)

Verily, the final decision is only with God. Upon Him do I rely, and upon Him let all rely who would rely. (XII, 67)

Upon God let the believers rely. And why should we not place reliance upon God when He has shown us the ways to follow? We will surely endure with patience whatever hurt you do us. Upon God let all rely who would rely. (XIV, 14-15)

Upon God do you rely if you are believers. (V, 26)

The last-quoted passage from the Koran brings out most clearly and tersely the semantic relationship between 'reliance' *tawakkul* and 'belief' *imān*. In just the same way the following example reveals the close interconnection between 'fear' *taqwā*[y] and 'humble-mindedness' *ikhbāt*.

Give good tidings unto the humble-minded whose hearts, whenever God is mentioned, tremble with fear. (XXII, 35-36)

Here the word actually used for 'fear' is not *taqwā*[y], but the verb *wajila* which denotes intense dread or extreme fear. As for the 'humble-mindedness', the word used in this passage is *mukhbit*, the adjectival-participial form of *ikhbāt*. There are a number of other terms expressing nearly the same thing. The root *KH-SH-* is one of the commonest. Here I give two examples of its use, whose general contextual situations bring out admirably well what kind of human character and what type of conduct are considered most deserving of the adjective 'humble'.

Seek help patiently and in prayer. Verily, this will appear extremely difficult save to the humble-minded (*khāshi*) who are well aware that they shall meet their Lord [on the Day of Judgment], and that unto Him they are all going back. (II, 42)

You may believe it [i. e. the Koran], or believe not. Those who were given the knowledge before this, whenever it is recited to them, fall down prostrate upon their beards, and say, 'Glory be to our Lord! Verily, the promise of our Lord will come to pass. And so they fall down prostrate upon their beards weeping the while, and it makes them humble-hearted ever more. (XVII, 108-109)

Another important word for humbleness is *taḍarru'*. The example which follows is of particular significance for our purpose in that it puts this word in sharp contrast with its antithesis and throws thereby a revealing light on the structure of its semantic category.

We have sent [Apostles] unto peoples before thee, and seized them with distress and hardship, in order that they might be humble (*yataḍarra'ūna*). Ah, if only they had been humble when Our might came upon them! But their hearts became [the more] hardened, and Satan embellished to their minds what they were doing.

(VI, 42-43)

'His heart becomes (or is) hard' is a standing expression in the Koran used to denote the peculiar mental attitude of the *kāfir*, which I have referred to several times. This is certain from other evidences as we shall see in a later chapter dealing with the problem of *kufr*. So we have here a very significant formula of semantic antithesis: 'humbleness' (*taḍarru'*)—'ungratefulness' (*kufr*). And since, as we know, ingratitude is the essential mark of unbelief, we obtain in conclusion a formula of equivalence: 'belief' = 'humbleness'.

It is highly important to remark in this connection that the Koran employs constantly the verb *istakbara* in describing the usual attitude of the pagan Arabs towards the evangelistic preaching of Muhammad. *Istakbara* is a verb derived from the root *KBR* 'big' and means something like 'to consider one's self big', 'to be haughty, insolent, or arrogant'. I have already referred to the negative side, so to speak, of its semantic structure in Chap. IV (See page 36). And much more will be said in a later context. Here it must suffice to note that Islam and Jahiliyyah stood at antipodes with each other concerning the principle of submission and humbleness as a fundamental way of life. As a matter of fact all the Islamic virtues deriving from this principle are the exact opposites of the cardinal virtues which the Arabs of the desert were so proud of.

Indeed, submission is the last thing a pagan Arab might be expected to do. As a poet said:

We refuse to all men submission to their leading  
till we lead them ourselves, yea, without reins!

(ʿAbid ibn al-Abras, *Diw.* IV, 20, tr. Lyall).

And he will stubbornly refuse to change this attitude even in the presence of God. For, to his mind accustomed to the lukewarm and half-hearted worship of idols, a god, after all, is not and cannot be an absolute being, absolutely superior to human beings.

As for the virtue of 'humble-mindedness', it goes without saying that it is nothing but an unmistakable evidence of base-mindedness. Only those who are base-born and of a mean despicable nature can be humble.

'Reliance' is held highly valuable in desert conditions; only it is not such submissive reliance on a superior being as Muhammad preaches, but a more human kind of reliance subsisting among the members of the tribe, and, in particular, reliance on one's self. Self-reliance is a mark of a noble nature. It is basic spiritual attitude which manifests itself in all phases of human conduct. It is designated by *istaghna*[y]. This word derives from a root meaning 'free from want' and is used to denote the attitude of a man who considers himself absolutely free in all his doings, who stands completely independent, or dependent only upon himself. Such an excess of self-confidence, viewed from the standpoint of Muhammad's monotheistic religion, represents a glaring case of insolence and presumptuousness because it implies ultimately the denying of the fact of man's creatureliness. The Koran emphasizes repeatedly that the only One who has the full right to take pride in being self-reliant or independent in the true sense is God. But to this point we shall have occasion to return later on.

## Chapter VII

## PAGAN MORAL IDEAS IN ISLAMIC DRESS

Hitherto it has been my constant endeavor to bring to light the basic antagonism that exists between Islam and Jahiliyyah regarding the fundamental principles of life. We would do a grave injustice, however, to the people of the Jahiliyyah and even to the position of Muhammad himself if we supposed that Muhammad denied and rejected without discrimination all the moral ideals of pre-Islamic Arabia as essentially incompatible with his monotheistic faith. There is clearly recognizable a certain continuity between the Koranic outlook and the old Arab world-view, as much as there is a wide cleavage between them. This is particularly noticeable in the sphere of ethical qualities. In this chapter we shall deal with this aspect of the problem.

It is true that in many important respects Muhammad broke completely with the old paganism, but it is, we should not forget, no less true that in spite of his bitter attacks on the pagans and their idolatrous customs, he adopted and revived in a new form suited to the needs of the day many if not most of the outstanding virtues of paganism. Perhaps, as Montgomery Watt has emphasized (in the above-cited book, p. 74-75), we have to bring to mind here the antithesis that was sharpening day after day between the nomadic virtue of *muruwah* 'manliness' and the mercantile ideal of the rich Meccans and the too obvious degeneration that the nomadic virtue had to suffer in the hands of the wealthy merchants of the city. 'The conduct of the rich Meccans would have been looked on as dishonorable in the desert, but there was nothing in the atmosphere of Mecca to make them feel ashamed.' In this respect we might perhaps speak of the moral aspect of Muhammad's movement even as a restoration of some of the old Bedouin ideals.

As one might expect, the pious Muslims of later ages have left many idealized pictures of Muhammad in high evaluation of the personality of their Prophet. Upon reading most of them we get a very strange impression; we feel as if we had before our eyes, not Muhammad, but a genuine hero of the Arabian desert. Curiously enough, the personal characteristics attributed to Muhammad in the books of apostolic tradition are quite in line with the old nomadic ideals of man that we find so highly praised in the works of pre-Islamic poets. Take for example the following description of Muhammad by Alī b. Ṭālib, given by Ibn Hishām in the *Sīrah* (I, 266): 'He was of all men the most open-handed, most stout-hearted, most truthful of tongue, most loyal in the keeping of his trusts, most serene of mind, and the noblest in friendly intercourse. Those who saw him for the first time feared him, but those who got acquainted with him loved him. Indeed, a man like him I have never seen'. No one will be surprised at all if it is said that

here is a picture of the ideal hero of the desert.

Be that as it may, it is a fact that we encounter in Islam many of the moral ideals of the desert in a new garment. We have already seen (Chap. IV) that the highest ethical ideal of the Jahiliyyah was *muruwah*, and that it included such various virtues as generosity, bravery and courage, patience, trustworthiness, truthfulness. In fact, to all these virtues the Muslims are exhorted very earnestly in the Koran. What is much more important to note, however, is that Muhammad did not revive or restore these nomadic virtues as he had found them among the Bedouin. In adopting them and assimilating them into the system of his moral teachings, he gave them a special twist, so to speak; he purified them in his own way to make them fresh and more suited to the main tenets of his religion, and succeeded in letting their energy flow into certain channels which he had prepared. Linguistically the same thing may be expressed by saying that with the advent of Islam some of the key ethical terms of the Jahiliyyah underwent a specific transformation.

Of the semantic categories of these words some became thereby considerably expanded, some were narrowed down; and again there were some that were developed in entirely new directions. In any case, with Muhammad the old *muruwah* was made to abandon all its harmful excesses and to assume a more civilized form. It began to work as a new moral energy in the midst of the growing community of the Muslims. And undoubtedly this has given a very specific coloring to Islamic ethical culture.

I Generosity (*jūd*, *karam* etc)

We shall begin with the virtue of liberal-mindedness or generosity, to which reference was often made in the foregoing pages. It is quite natural that under desert conditions the spirit of charity and generosity should be given so high a place in the list of noble qualities. In the desert, where even the basic material necessities are very scarce, acts of hospitality and helpfulness are beyond any doubt a necessary aspect of the struggle for existence. But there is something more than that. We may observe first of all the fact that generosity in the mind of the pagan Arab was closely connected with the Jahili conception of honor. As a great poet of the Jahiliyyah, Zuhair ibn Abū Sulmā, said:

Whoever makes of generosity a shield for his personal honor makes it grow. But whoever neglects to guard himself from blame, will be blamed. (Mu'allaqah, 51, p. 86)

Acts of generosity were held as a proof of genuine nobility. And the more extravagant and impulsive an act of generosity was, the more it aroused admiration.



With the pagan Arabs charity was not simply a natural manifestation of the feeling of tribal solidarity, for very often it did extend beyond the members of one's own tribe to the strangers who happened to be there. Nor was it always dictated by the motive of benevolence and kindness. It was first and foremost an act of chivalry. A man who could make a royal display of his generosity was a true dandy of the desert. Generosity in this sense was a master-passion of the Arab. It was not so much a 'virtue' as a blind, irresistible impulse that was deeply rooted in the Arab heart. We may profitably recall at this point the fact already referred to, that the pre-Islamic poets used to boast of their habit of excessive wine-drinking as a mark of a genuinely generous nature, that is, as a mark of nobility. A man of noble nature, so they sang, should not care for the morrow. The true meaning of this is that he should do acts of liberality for the sake of the joy of playing the dandy. And, to inspire the greatest degree of admiration in the minds of the onlookers, not to speak of the guests themselves, the liberality should naturally go to the extreme of thoughtless prodigality. Ḥātim of Ṭayyī' was acknowledgedly a perfect embodiment of the Bedouin ideal of generosity, of whom many half-legendary stories have been handed down to us by tradition. We should remember in this connection that the adjective *karīm* is just the word in Old Arabic for such a combination of the ideas of lavish generosity and nobility. *Karīm*, in other words, is a man who is acknowledged by everybody as 'noble' just because he shows himself in his doings to be of an extremely liberal nature. We have already seen how Muhammad dealt a blow to the semantic category of this adjective by re-defining it forcibly in terms of fear and piety.

Basically the position adopted by Muhammad agrees with the outlook of the pagan Arabs in that it, too, places a high value upon charity. For him, no less than for a Jahilī, generosity represented an important virtue. The sole fact that he made it the economic basis of his new religio-political community goes to show clearly how high it stood in his estimation. Besides, in itself the nomadic ideal of generosity contained nothing offensive to, and incompatible with the central tenets of the Islamic faith.

I am not a man who lurks about fearfully among the hills.

I am here ready to help, whenever people call for my charity.

So the poet Ṭarafa said (Mu'allaqah, 45). 'Fearfully', that is, through fear of guests who might come to his tent expecting hospitalities. Nothing prevents such an attitude from being honorable and praiseworthy in the eyes of the Muslims. In fact, we see the famous panegyrist of Muhammad, the poet Ḥassān ibn Thābit, describing him in an encomium as a man who 'is lavishly generous with his possessions, whether inherited or newly gained, even in times of hardship when an admittedly liberal man would hesitate to give of his wealth.'

Only there is a fundamental difference between the two positions. The difference lies in this, that Muhammad denied all value to acts of generosity originating in the desire to make a show of it. Dandyism or chivalry for its own sake was in his view nothing but a Satanic passion. What is important is not the act of generosity, but the motive underlying it. All acts of generosity are absolutely valueless that come from the source of vainglory and pride.

O believers, you must not make your charity vain by grudging and making disagreeable remarks, as one who expends of his wealth simply for the pleasure of an ostentatious display, and not from his belief in God and the Last Day. Such a man may be compared to a smooth stone covered with soil; a rainstorm smites it and leaves it smooth and bare. Though they have amassed great wealth, they can make naught out of that, for God guides not the *kāfir* people.

(II, 255)

It follows that although generosity is a virtue, it ceases to be a virtue and becomes even positively a vice if it goes to the length of wastefulness. A prodigal is formally declared a Devil's brother:

Give the kinsman his due, and the poor, and the wayfarer. But never waste in sheer waste, for those who squander are brothers of Satan, and Satan is ever ungrateful (*kāfir*) to his Lord.

(XVII, 28-29)

Niggardliness is of course dishonorable, it is admittedly a moral defect or a vice. But the excess of lavishness is no less a dishonorable moral defect. Keep always to the happy medium—this is the rule of conduct that must control the conduct of the believers in matters concerning private property.

Keep not thy hand fettered to thy neck, nor yet spread it out too widespread, lest thou shouldst become an object of reproach or stripped naked. Lo, thy Lord spreads out His provision to whomsoever He will or again straitens it as He will.

(XVII, 31-32)

The true servants of the Merciful God are.....those who, when they spend, are neither prodigal nor miserly, but who ever take the constant mean between the two.

(XXV, 67)

In order that generosity might become a genuine Islamic virtue, it must first of all be deprived of the reckless, thoughtless nature it used to disclose in the days

of Jahiliyyah. One who goes to the length of slaughtering on the spur of the moment or, worse still, merely for display, all his camels without stopping a moment to think that his act may reduce him and his family to misery and perdition on the morrow—such a one may very well have been a model of *muruwah* in the Jahiliyyah, but is no longer to be considered a man of true generosity. A man of true generosity is he who 'expends his wealth in God's way', that is, from a pious motive. And being founded on piety, it must be something well-controlled and restrained. Generosity in Islam is something essentially different from the boastful and excessive charity which the pagan Arabs were so much fond of.

Thus the duty of almsgiving was offered to the Muslims as the most suitable mold into which they might pour their natural generosity without being led into the Satanic vice of haughtiness and extravagance. Almsgiving provided in this way a new outlet for the old instinct of generosity that was deeply rooted in the Arab soul, but it was so calculated, at the same time, as to work as a powerful regulator of its excessive energy.

As is well-known, in the Muslim empire after the Prophet's death, almsgiving developed rapidly into a legalized income-tax known under the name of *zakāt*. But there is evidence that this development was already in process during his lifetime. And yet, in the Koran itself we find no precise indication as to how and how much alms should be paid. The believers are strongly exhorted to almsgiving as an act of pious benevolence; it still belongs to the sphere of personal ethics rather than that of social duties; it is a religious duty. It should be noted in this connection that those verses in which almsgiving is enjoined upon the believers—and which, by the way, are extremely numerous—contain almost always some reference to 'faith' as its ultimate living source and 'eschatological reward' as its final result.

Believe in God and His Apostle, and expend [i.e. give alms] of that which He has given you in inheritance. Those of you who believe and give alms, for them there shall be a mighty reward. (LVII, 7)

Those who expend their wealth in God's way may be compared to a grain that sprouts seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. God will increase for whom He pleases. For God embraces all and knows everything. Those who expend their wealth in God's way, and then follow not up what they expended with grudging and the making of disagreeable remarks, those shall have their wage with their Lord, and no fear shall come upon them, neither shall they grieve. (II, 263-264)

From some passages of the Koran we gather that there were people, particularly

among the Arabs of the desert, who, though outwardly good Muslims, regarded the alms they gave as a sort of fine-money (*maghram*) or compulsory donation, whereas the Muslims worthy of the name should regard all that they expended in alms as a means of approaching God.

Of the Bedouin there are some who regard what they expend [in the way of God] as a forced donation, and wait [in secret] a turn of fortune against you [i.e. the Muslims]. Against them shall be the turn of evil fortune, for God hears all and knows all.

Again of the Bedouin there are some who believe in God and the Last Day, and take what they expend for a means of approach to God and to the prayers of the Apostle. And so it really is a means of approach. (IX, 99-100)

But even here, even in the way of God, thoughtless extravagance is to be avoided. Almsgiving is a religious duty imposed on every Muslim, but to give out all one has too liberally and thoughtlessly until one is cast by one's own hands into perdition is neither more nor less than to fall back into the godless folly of the Jahiliyyah. The following passage from Surah II is best understood, I think, as referring to this point, though according to the old commentaries it is capable of being explained in several other ways.

Expend your wealth in God's way, but cast not yourselves by your own hands into perdition [i.e. 'by squandering it thoughtlessly so as to endanger your own livelihood'—*al-Baidāwī*]. Try to do good (*aḥsnū*) [i.e. your aim in expending in alms should be solely to do an act of kindness, and not to make a show of extravagant liberality], for God loves the good-doers (*muḥsinīna*) (II, 191)

If it is disgraceful to be cast by one's own hands to ruin, it is much more disgraceful to be called a 'niggard'. Niggardliness (*bukhl*) as the opposite of the virtue of generosity, was looked upon as a glaring case of shamelessness and ignominy. In view of the highest estimation in which generosity stood, it is indeed quite natural that in both Jahiliyyah and Islam niggardliness was regarded as a most despicable quality; and to show even the slightest sign of it was held as something of which a manly man should be ashamed. The poet Zuhair in a famous passage of his grand Ode, known as an epitome of the desert ethics says:

He who, being in possession of great wealth, shows himself niggardly of it towards his folk shall end by being shunned and reviled. (*Mu'allaqah*, v, 52)

It is told that Muhammad once asked the people of Banū Salamah, 'Who is your chief?'; when they replied, 'al-Jadd ibn Qais, though he is a niggard', the Apostle said 'There is no disease more malignant than niggardliness.' (Ibn Ishāq I, 309)

It is highly probable, as Montgomery Watt suggests (*op. cit.* III, 3), that about the time of Muhammad the conduct of the rich Meccans particularly tended to show signs of such a dishonorable nature, and that it is chiefly these rich Meccan merchants that are so severely rebuked in the Koran as 'niggards' who are incorrigibly rotten to the core. We should remember, however, that even in the desert in the days of Jahiliyyah there appears to have been a large number of persons who were conspicuous by their niggardliness and covetousness. The very fact that so many poets in so many passages of their works declare emphatically that they are perfectly free from this vice is good evidence of the existence of it in the society. Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī in his recent book on the life of the Arabs as mirrored in the pre-Islamic poetry — *al-Ḥayāt al-'Arabiyyah min al-Shi'r al-Jāhili*, Cairo 1952 p. 252 ff. — draws attention to a very curious fact that, as far as we can gather from the poetry of the Jahiliyyah and old traditions contained in the Book of Songs and others, this was particularly the case with women. From abundant evidence he draws a conclusion to the effect that in the time of Jahiliyyah women generally tended to be niggards, or at least they had to show themselves more niggardly than men on account of their particular position in society and in home. In their eyes, the principle of unrestrained generosity was not a praiseworthy virtue at all; it was, on the contrary, an incurable vice of the other sex, which was all the more to be repressed because it was by nature harmful and destructive to the happiness of family life. From their standpoint, generous hospitality — particularly when it was too generous — was nothing more than stupidity and foolishness (*safah*). In fact, we see in old poetry wives described as incessantly casting reproach on their husbands for their carelessness in squandering away their precious things, and men, on their part, as busy making attempt to justify their extravagant generosity, the only excuse they can afford being that such generosity is the sole way to an eternal fame while wealth is the way to blame and shame.

It would be extremely interesting to observe that the point of view of the rich Meccan merchants at the time of the rise of Islam was exactly the same as that of the Jahili housewives just referred to. Here, in the essentially mercantile community of Mecca, the ideal of *muruwah* had lost its all-powerful influence. The tribal sense of honor was no longer capable to function as the real basis of human life. Wealth, not honor, was now the ideal of life. Wealth, of which the desert Arabs used to speak in so disparaging terms as a way to blame and shame, was regarded here as the only way to glory. Far from being a vice, niggardliness was now a sign of a good financial ability, the real source of power and eminence in the society. It is natural that the rich Meccans, even after they adopted Islam,

still continued to 'clench their hands', as the Koran says, (IX, 68), and grudging giving the prescribed alms or even flatly refused to give anything in alms. It is also natural that the Koran should accuse them of niggardliness.

Some of them have given a solemn pledge to God that 'if He give us of His bounty, we will surely give alms and become of the good believers'. And yet, when He actually gave them of His bounty, they showed themselves niggardly (*bakhilū*, from *bukhl*) thereof, and turned away and swerved aside. (IX, 76)

Muhammad does not hesitate to threaten them with the most dreadful eschatological punishment.

Let not those who show themselves niggardly (*yabkhalūna*, from *bukhl*) of what God has given them of His bounty, count that it is better for them. Nay, it is worse for them, for on the day of Resurrection they shall have hung around their necks all that they have been so niggardly of. (III, 175-176)

Those who store up gold and silver, and expend it not in God's way — give them the good tidings of a painful torment! On the day when they shall be heated in the fire of Hell, and their foreheads shall be burnt therewith, and their sides and their backs likewise. 'This is [the reward] of what you have stored up for yourselves; so taste you now what you stored up!' (IX, 34)

I should like to draw attention to the small phrase 'in God's way' in this passage. It shows that there again what is made the target of condemnation is not niggardliness in general, but niggardliness in the specific sphere of religious activity. It is, in other words, those who are niggardly in the way of God, those who reveal their niggardly nature particularly in the fulfilment of the duty of almsgiving, that are sentenced to the eternal punishment of Hell. For the same kāfirs showed themselves ready and willing to spend their wealth generously when they knew that they were thereby aiding the cause of resistance to Muhammad's new religious movement. Many verses of the Koran bear witness to this. 'Lo! those who are kāfirs spend their wealth freely for the purpose of debarring men from God's way' (Surah VIII, 36).

Muhammad's vigorous denunciation of niggardliness as a vice worthy of severe punishment had nothing novel and unfamiliar about it in the social background of the day, particularly among the desert Arabs. It was in a certain respect nothing but a revival of an important aspect of the old nomadic ideal. And if we take

into account the above-mentioned fact about the conspicuous tendency towards niggardliness among Jahili women, we might perhaps speak of it as a restoration of the specifically 'manly' aspect of the ideal of *muruwah*. But it was not simple revivification of the old Bedouin sentiment of bitter hatred towards all that debars men from lavish generosity. It is highly characteristic of Muhammad that he tried to revive this sentiment not as it was there, but in a form best-suited to the requirements of his religion. To the old inveterate hate of niggardliness in the Arab mind he gave a fresh stimulus, giving it a new direction and furnishing it with a new invigorating ideal.

This, however, should not make us forget the fact that this condemnation of niggardliness 'in the way of God' was backed by a deep insight into the essential features of human nature. Man is by nature niggardly, covetous, and greedy. Niggardliness in God's way is, viewed from this point, but a manifestation of the more fundamental tendency of the human soul.

Say, 'Even if you were in possession of the treasures of my Lord's mercy, yet you would surely remain tight-fisted, ever afraid of expending. Verily man is niggardly'. (XVII, 102)

The word here translated 'niggardly' is *qatūr*, which means the same as *bakkil*, that is, one who is characterized by *bukhl*, a niggardly, avaricious, or stingy person. The root *QTR* appears in a verbal form in Surah XXV, 67 quoted above (p. 69); there it is used very significantly in antithesis to *isrāf*, i.e. the act of squandering away one's wealth carelessly. 'The true servants of God are.....those who.....neither squander (*yusrifū*) nor yet behave too niggardly (*yaqturū*), but who ever take the constant mean between the two extremes'. From this it is clear that *qatr* represents the other extreme of the scale starting from prodigality in the direction of non-prodigality, that is, niggardliness in the utmost degree.

The Koran offers in this sphere another important word, *shuḥḥ* (or *shahḥ* or *shihḥ*), meaning the utmost degree of niggardliness or covetousness. The word always tends to carry an undertone of strong deprecation and disapproval; it presents niggardliness as a culpable state of mind. Concerning the difference between *shuḥḥ* and *bukhl*, the *Kulliyāt al-'Ulūm* of Abu al-Baqā al-Kaffawī says that *bukhl* denotes the very act of niggardliness whereas *shuḥḥ* refers to the particular state of the soul that necessitates such acts of niggardliness (cf. al-Bustānī, *Muḥīt al-Muḥīt* I, 69). This interpretation appears to be confirmed by the Koranic use of the word in question. It is at any rate highly significant that the Koran uses *shuḥḥ* in reference to the essential nature of the human soul.

*Shuḥḥ* in the very nature of souls. But if you do acts of charity through fear of God, verily God will never fail to take notice of

what you do.

(IV, 127)

Fear God as much as you can, and give ear, and obey, and expend willingly for the sake of your souls. And whosoever is saved from the *shuḥḥ* of his soul, such are the prosperous. (LXIV, 16; cf. also LIX, 9)

## II Courage (*shajā'ah*)

I have tried to show above how Muhammad revived the old ideal of generosity in the religious atmosphere of his newly-formed community and succeeded in developing the peculiarly Arab impulse to generosity into a genuine Islamic virtue. Practically the same thing is true of the virtue of bravery.

Now it was natural that in desert conditions courage or bravery was given the highest place in the list of virtues. It was admittedly an essential ingredient of the *muruwah*. In the Arabian steppes where the forces of nature are so severe against human beings and where brigandage, far from constituting a crime, is often almost the only alternative to death, nothing can excel in importance physical strength and military prowess. The tribal honor among the pagan Arabs, of which I have given above a somewhat detailed description, was to a large extent a matter of prowess. For the Arabs of the desert, the bloodiest fight, whether tribal or personal, was the very source and mainspring of life as well as of honor. The time was indeed hard for weaklings and cowards.

My lineage goes not back to weaklings and the unarmoured  
Nor to some abject, miserable cowards on the battlefield,  
But a son of those warriors am I, who used to smite  
The streaks of the helms whenever they met them,  
Who with long sword-belts, imperturbably went to death.

So says ʿIḍrār ibn al-Khaṭṭāb with evident pride. In the desert where, as the poet Zuhair says, 'he who defends not his watering-place with his own weapons will have it devastated, and he who wrongs not others will himself be wronged', bravery was not simply a defensive weapon; it was something much more positive and aggressive. Zuhair does not mind declaring openly in his moral teaching that it is not enough for 'a warrior, fierce as a lion, to strike back and chastise his enemy when the latter has struck him a blow; he should rather take the initiative and become an aggressor when no one wrongs him' (*Mu'allaqah* 38-39, 57). Thus the virtue of courage and bravery among the pagan Arabs was often no better than barbarous cruelty and inhuman ferocity in tribal feuds. We have already seen in Chap. IV that this precisely is what characterizes *jāhiliyyah* as opposed to the

state of *hilm*.

Islam does not differ from the Jahiliyyah in its praise of courage and scorn of cowardice. Here too, as in pagan times, it was the highest honor to be described as 'unfaltering in danger, no weakling they; bold and intrepid against their enemy in every arena of battle' (Ka'b ibn Mālik), and it was no less a disgrace for the Muslims than for the pagan Arabs to be reported: 'They shrunk from death; that is why their private pasture-land was taken as a spoil. They did the act of base and mean cowards.' Just as in the case of generosity, however, Muhammad cut off all excessive elements from this Jahili virtue and made out of it a typically Islamic virtue. In the days of paganism courage was displayed, as it were, for courage's sake. A broad survey of pre-Islamic poetry creates an impression that the Jahili warriors showed dauntless, reckless courage on the battlefield only to gratify an irresistible desire; courage was then largely a matter of unrestrained and unrestrainable impulse. In Muhammad's hand this underwent a peculiarly Islamic transformation, without, however, losing an atom of its original energy. It was no longer a blind, unruly impulse. It was now a noble, well-ordered courage with the lofty aim observing the cause of the right religion: courage 'in the way of God'.

O you who believe, smite the *kāfir* in your neighborhood until you bring them to cry mercy. But always remember that God is with those who fear [God]. (IX, 124)

Will you not smite a people who broke their pledges and intended to expel the Apostle? They attacked you first. What! Are you afraid of them? God deserves more that you should be afraid of Him, if you are really believers.

Smite them! God will chastise them at your hands, and disgrace them, and help you against them towards victory. He will heal the breasts of a people who believe, and will remove the burning rage from their hearts. God turns unto whom He pleases.

(IX, 13-15)

Rumor spreads unbelievably fast in the desert. For the Jahili warrior it was an unbearable shame to be talked about in the neighborhood that he had turned his back upon the enemy on the battlefield and fled before them, for it was sure to bring the deepest disgrace not only upon his own head but also upon the tribal honor itself. In Islam, too, to fly before the enemy when fighting in the way of God was to commit the most infamous offence against religion and God. To be called runaway (*farrār*) was a moral stain that could not be wiped off easily. Thus in the battle of Mu'ta in A.H. 8, the Muslim army was severely smitten by the overwhelmingly numerous enemy. The famous 'Sword of Allah', Khālid ibn

al-Walid, being a great commander, decided to beat a hasty retreat in order to avoid spilling Muslim blood to no purpose. When, however, the army came back to Medina, the enraged crowd threw dirt at them, shouting, 'O you runaways! How durst you flee in the way of God? And even Muhammad could not allay the excitement. It is related about a certain Salamah ibn Hishām that he could not go out of his house even a step. His wife, when asked, 'How is it that I do not see your husband at prayers with the Apostle together with other believers?' is said to have replied, 'By God, it is actually impossible for him to go out. For every time he does the people shout, 'Coward! You fled in God's way!' so much so that he remains nowadays in his house and never goes out.' (Ibn Ishāq, II, 798). We find the same state of mind expressed in the Koran, though with a mitigating reservation which is intended to justify the cases where the Muslims have to beat a retreat for some strategic purpose.

O you who believe, when you encounter the *kāfirs* marching against you, turn not your back to them. He who on such a day turns his back to them—unless he be escaping by stratagem to attack them afresh or withdrawing to join another troop—he has incurred the wrath of God; his final habitation will be Hell; an evil journey, indeed! (VIII, 15-16)

Those who show reluctance in going forth in the way of God disclose by that very attitude that they are not true Muslims. 'No matter how they may swear by God that they belong to your community [i.e. that they are Muslims], they are in reality not of you, for they are a people of a cowardly nature (*yafrāqūna*: *faraq* meaning 'to be timorous, pusillanimous')' (Surah IX, 56). In the following passages it is categorically affirmed that the true believer (*mu'min*), that is, 'he who fears [God]' (*muttaqī*) does not fear his human enemy, and is ready to fight strenuously with his wealth and his person, while he who does not fear God does fear to fight in His way.

Those who believe in God and the Last Day will never beg off from going to fight; they will strive with their wealth and their lives. God is aware of those who fear [Him]. They alone beg off from thee who believe not in God and the Last Day, and whose hearts are in doubt, so that they waver in their doubt. (IX, 44-45)

What is the matter with you, o believers, that when it is said to you, 'Go forth in the way of God,' you bend down heavily to the ground? Are you, then, so much satisfied with this present life rather than the world to come? But the enjoyment of the life of



this world, is but a trifle, compared with the world to come. If you go not forth, He will punish you with a painful chastisement, and He will put in your place some other people. Any way, you cannot do Him any harm. He is mighty over everything.

(IX, 44-45)

To put it in a nutshell, what is now demanded of a true believer is no longer that brute courage of which the poets of the Jahiliyyah spoke so boastfully, but an entirely new kind of military prowess born of, and based on a firm belief in God and the Last Day. In the Jahiliyyah courage was something groundless and without direction. Muhammad provided it with a definite direction, and succeeded, as the subsequent history of the Islamic empire affords abundant proof, in creating out of it the most formidable weapon in the hands of the believers for fighting the enemies of Allah.

### III Loyalty (*wafā'*)

That faithfulness or trustworthiness was one of the highest and most characteristic virtues in the desert is known to every reader of the pre-Islamic poetry and traditions. As might be expected, the Jahili virtue of loyalty was largely a matter of kinship by blood. It was mostly practised within the bounds of the tribe; but within this narrow sphere, i. e. among the fellow-tribesmen, loyalty ruled absolute and supreme. It manifested itself as the most disinterested self-sacrifice on behalf of one's kinsmen, the most faithful devotion to one's friends and also as the greatest fidelity shown in the keeping of a covenant plighted and trust committed. Very often a solemn compact could extend the sphere of effectiveness of this virtue even far beyond the limits of the tribe. This is illustrated by the typical example of Samau'al ibn Ādiyā, which is too well-known now to be repeated in any detail here. (See for instance Nicholson's *Literary History* p. 84-85). Demanded by a besieging tyrant to surrender the coats of mail which the poet Imru' al-Qais had committed to him, Samu'al, though no relative by blood of the poet, refused to do so and finally had his son slaughtered before his own eyes in the cruellest way rather than break his pledge. Even today the name of Samau'al still survives on the lips of the Arabs as the highest embodiment of the Bedouin ideal of loyalty. And the poet Zuhair, in the oft-quoted passage of his *Mu'allaqah* says concerning *wafā'*:

He who proves faithful to his covenant escapes blame, and he whose heart aims at the calmness of integrity will never have to falter.

(*Mu'all*, 43)

This fervent veneration for faithfulness and loyalty Islam inherited from the

Jahiliyyah, as it were, in its original nomadic vigorousness. It is clear from both the Koran itself and Apostolic Tradition that the virtue of loyalty peculiar to the desert Arabs was adopted by Muhammad as an important item of the Islamic moral code and was even given there a very high place of honor. Just as in the case of other nomadic ideals, however, Muhammad did not remain content with simple adoption, but developed this old virtue in his peculiar way, and succeeded in leading it into the groove of his monotheistic faith. This Islamic transformation of the nomadic virtue of *wafā'* was effected in two distinct but closely related directions, (1) in the sphere of ordinary social relationships between the believers and (2) in the properly religious sphere concerning the vertical relationship between God and man.

On the first of these two points little need be said here. For any detailed discussion of this aspect of the question would be nothing more than tedious repetition of what was already said in Chapter VI concerning the abolition of tribal solidarity in Islam. The virtue of *wafā'*, having been born of a particular consciousness of blood-fellowship brought by a solemn ceremony of sacrifice, was primarily a tribal or inter-tribal affair. It was first of all the most chivalrous devotion to each other between the members of one and the same tribe. It was, secondly, the sacred covenant-connection between different tribes and clans. Any two tribes that happened to agree on anything, friendship, for example, or marriage, trading, etc., offered a common sacrifice to some deity, and entered under such sanction into a solemn agreement. Islam, by breaking down all limitations due to the tribal pattern of society, put the virtue of fidelity on a wider basis, transformed it into something super-tribal, truly human. *Wafā'* thus became a moral force capable of operating in an individualistic society.

What is much more important is the second of the two points as distinguished above: the Islamic transformation of *wafā'* in the religious sphere. Here we see Muhammad transcending all the crude ideas of primitive nomadic religion and betaking himself to the characteristically Semitic conception of Covenant, as a formal expression of the religious bond between God and men. It is transparent that this is represented by the Old Testament point of view. The most fundamental and most general frame within which the religious consciousness of Israel moved and developed was the idea of the covenant between Yahweh and the people of Israel as a whole. 'I will be your God, and you shall be My people. 'The covenant was first imposed on Israel from the part of Yahweh by his act of pure grace in redeeming them out of Egypt. This point is repeatedly emphasized in the Koran, too. 'We delivered you from Pharaoh's family who were inflicting atrocious tortures..... We tore in two the [Red] Sea and delivered you, and drowned Pharaoh's family before your own eyes.' (Surah II, 46-47) But all covenant, inasmuch as it is a covenant, puts both parties under mutual obligations. By the very act of imposing His covenant on a people, Yahweh also laid Himself under obligation to fulfil the

covenant conditions; He gave His word that He should be God of Israel, love them, deliver them, guide them to salvation, with all that is implied by 'being the God of a people'. And, it should be remembered, 'God never breaks His promise, though most men do not know it' (Surah, XXX, 5). Thus Yahweh and Israel contracted themselves into a mutual relationship of claims and rights.

O children of Israel, remember My blessing with which I blessed you, and fulfil My covenant and I shall fulfil yours. Me you should fear. (II, 38)

It is beyond any doubt that Muhammad transferred this particular relationship between Yahweh and Israel just as it was there into the very center of Islamic religion and made it the basic form of the relationship between Allah and the Muslims.

Verily, those who swear fealty to thee [Muhammad] swear fealty by that very act unto God. The hand of God is over their hands [representing the ritual ceremony of covenant-making]. So whosoever breaks his oath [after that] breaks it only to his own hurt, and whosoever fulfils his covenant with God, on him will God bestow a mighty reward. (XLVIII, 10)

The conception of religion as based on a covenant between two parties is indeed no less characteristic of the Koran than of the Old Testament. And practically all the moral values that developed in Islam may be said to have something to do with the covenant-idea, directly or to at least indirectly. The virtue of *ṢDQ* is perhaps the first of those that are most intimately related to this basic conception. The root appears in a number of forms: *ṣadaqa* verbal, *ṣidq* nominal, *ṣādiq* participial-adjectival, *ṣiddiq* emphatic-adjectival, and so on.

Now the radical meaning of these words is far more difficult to detect than it would appear at first sight. We may make a beginning by noting that among the old Arab lexicographers *ṣidq* is recognized by common consent to be the exact opposite of *kadhib* ('falsehood', 'lie'). According to Ibn Fāris (ibn Zakariyyā), the famous author of *Muǧmal fī Maqāyīs al-Lughah* which is one of the earliest alphabetical dictionaries, the basic meaning of the root is 'strength or hardness' whether of language or other things. This original meaning, he says, is still to be seen in the adjective *ṣadq* meaning 'hard, vigorous'. *Ṣidq* is 'truth' of language, so named because of its 'strength' as opposed to falsehood which is weak and powerless (*Muǧmal*, ed. by Abd as-Salām Muhammad Hārūn, Cairo, III, p. 329). In effect, the most usual sense in which it is used is admittedly that of the truth of an information. *Ṣidq* is to 'speak truth', in the sense that the piece of information one gives is true,

i. e. conforms to the reality. This meaning of the word is clearly seen in the most ordinary sentences of the type: 'They investigated the report closely and found that the reporter had spoken truth (*ṣadaqa*)'. In sentences of this kind *ṣidq* means beyond any doubt the conformity of language to reality. This, however, is not enough.

Now the truth of language, that is, the process by which any speech becomes true, may be looked at from its two opposite side, subjective and objective. The objective pole of such process is the reality to which language conforms itself. In Arabic this pole is designated by the word *ḥaqq*, a word which is also generally translated 'truth'. *Ḥaqq* then, represents the specifically objective side of the truth. *Ṣidq* is precisely the opposite pole; it refers more particularly to a property in the speaker, which tends to make his words correspond with the reality, i. e. his truthfulness. The following example taken at random brings out this point admirably well. 'The Apostle of God informed the people of what they knew was truth (*ḥaqq*) and so they recognized at once his truthfulness (*ṣidq*).'

It would be extremely interesting to notice at this juncture a very curious observation made by some Arab lexicographers about the semantic structure of *ṣidq*. For a given statement to be complete *ṣidq*, we are told, it is not enough that the words used conform to the reality; they should also conform to the idea in the mind of the speaker. What does this mean? The point is that in order that a given piece of information, say, 'X is Y' might be *ṣidq* in the full sense of the word, it is not sufficient that X is really Y, but first and foremost the speaker himself must really mean it; he must have the *intention* of conforming himself to reality. And as far as I know, it is this, I mean, the existence of the intention or determination to be true, that constitutes the most decisive element in the semantic structure of *ṣidq*. But the formula 'the intention to be true to reality' may, as a matter of actual fact, be understood in various ways and may cover wider or narrower meanings, because the 'reality' on its side admits of considerable variety. It may be simply an objective fact (*ḥaqq*), popular custom, any rule of conduct, a treaty, or again the words one has uttered oneself. In all these cases *ṣidq* acquires very obvious implications of sincerity, steadfastness, honesty, and trustworthiness. Thus it comes about that we encounter many examples of actual usage of *ṣidq* in the Koran as well as elsewhere, which mere 'speaking the truth' could in no way account for.

The most remarkable of all—and that not only from the specific standpoint of the present chapter, but more generally—is perhaps the case where in the Koran *ṣādiq* is used in contrast to *kāfir* or *munāfiq* 'perfidious'.

*ṣādiq* ← *kāfir*

And when We [Allah] imposed a covenant upon the Prophets, and upon thee [Muhammad], and upon Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus son of Mary. We imposed upon them a solemn covenant, that He [Allah] might question [on the Last Day] the *ṣādiq*

concerning their *ṣidq*. He has prepared for the *kāfir* a painful chastisement. (XXXIII, 7-8)

We are told here that on the Day of Judgment all men will be divided into two categories: the class of *ṣādiq* and the class of *kāfir*. The *ṣādiq* are those who have remained throughout their life unswervingly true to the covenant obligations, while the *kāfir* are, as we already know very well, those who have always shown themselves ungrateful to the grace of God, and have been, by implication, untrue and unfaithful to the same covenant. It is highly significant that in this passage *ṣidq* is spoken of in particular reference to the covenant between God and His people. Here the contextual situation forces us to translate *ṣādiq* by 'faithful', and *ṣidq* by 'faithfulness' or 'loyalty'. Likewise in the following passage in which *ṣādiq* stands opposed to *munāfiq* 'perfidious', the verb *ṣadaqa* (in m. pl. form *ṣadaqū*) should be rendered as 'they remained true to — or, they fulfilled — (their covenant)'.

*ṣādiq* ← *munāfiq*

There are amongst the believers men who have remained true (*ṣādaqū*) to their covenant with God, and there are some who have fulfilled their vow [by martyrdom], and some who still wait and have not changed lightly; that God might reward the *ṣādiq*, and punish the *munāfiq* if He please, or turn again unto them.

(XXXIII, 23-24)

The word *ṣidq* which appears alongside of '*adl*' 'justice' in Surah VI, 115 must perhaps be understood in the same way. This interpretation becomes the more probable if we, as I think we should, take the latter half of the passage indicating the absolute unchangeableness of divine words as a kind of periphrasis for what is implied by *ṣidq*.

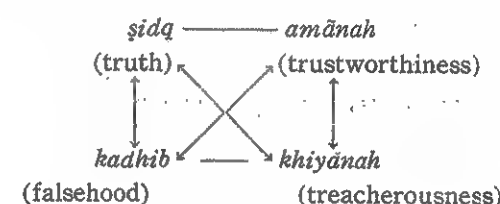
Perfect are the words of thy Lord in *ṣidq* and '*adl*'. Naught can change His words.

Here we see *ṣidq* used in reference to the words of God. The assertion that the words of God are 'faithful' may seem at first blush very odd. But in reality there is nothing surprising about this, because, as I have pointed out earlier, the force of the covenant-idea is such that even God, as one of the parties to the contract, stands under obligation to remain true and faithful to it, even if it be His own words. God's words once uttered cannot be changed with fickleness; they are in the nature of the case absolutely trustworthy.

However this may be, it is certain that *ṣidq* in the sense of 'being true to one's words' comes very near the above-mentioned word *wafā* which, as we saw, also

denotes the quality in man of being faithful and loyal. And in fact we encounter very often these two terms employed side by side as almost indistinguishable synonyms: e. g. 'I am in covenant with Muhammad and I do not wish to break my word because I have never seen in him except faithfulness (*wafā* and *ṣidq*)'. (Ibn Ishāq II, 674) And a poet contemporary with Muhammad says in a passage of his poem composed after the battle of Uhud: 'We parted with Abū Sufyān on the promise that we should meet again at Badr; but we found him not to his promise true (*ṣidq*) nor was he a man of faithfulness (*wafā*) — participial-adjectival form of *wafā*'. (ibid. II, 620).

It would be not without interest to note in this connection what Abū Bakr is said to have remarked concerning *ṣidq*. It is related that, when he was elected Caliph after the Apostle's death, he declared in a passage of his speech, 'The essence of *ṣidq* is *amānah*, while the essence of *kadhib* is *khiyānah*'. *Amānah* is another word meaning the human quality of being trustworthy, trustworthiness, or honesty, while *khiyānah* denotes its opposite, namely, treacherousness, betrayal, or perfidy. The real import of the words just quoted may be made obvious by the following square:



It will be easy to see how closely *ṣidq* was related to the idea of trustworthiness in the linguistic consciousness of the old Arabs, and also how high a place it occupied in the list of the nomadic as well as Islamic virtues.

There remains to explain one more important form derived from the same root, *ṣiddiq*. It is extremely difficult to state in a definite manner the exact meaning of this controversial term. One thing is certain: that this is a *mubālaghah* (exaggeration)-form of *ṣādiq*. It denotes, in other words, the highest possible degree of *ṣidq*; but this still is very ambiguous because *ṣidq*, as we know, have two distinguishable aspects. According to the commonest view among the Arab philologists, it refers specifically to the element of speaking the truth. *Ṣiddiq* in this view means 'highly veracious', 'who speaks nothing other than truth', 'who never lies'.

Now the term *ṣiddiq* is widely known as the honorary epithet of the Caliph Abū Bakr, and is generally understood in this sense. A closer examination, however, of the traditional account of the occasion on which Abū Bakr received this honorific would lead as to a somewhat different interpretation. Tradition relates that, when Muhammad, immediately after the famous experience of the ascension to Heaven and night journey through the sky to Jerusalem, gave a detailed account

of this experience, grave doubts were aroused in the minds of all the Muslims who were there with regard to its truthfulness. The only person who did not allow his faith to be shaken by Muhammad's account was, we are told, Abū Bakr. He alone kept on saying while the Apostle described in detail what he had seen in Jerusalem, 'That is true. I testify that you are the Apostle of God.' At the end of his account, Muhammad said, 'And you, Abū Bakr, are indeed *ṣiddīq*'.

If we are to take this tradition as it is, it would follow that *ṣiddīq* does not mean 'one who speaks the truth', but rather 'one who testifies to the truth of something'. It does not matter very much whether this tradition be authentic or not. It is valuable for our present purpose in that it gives us an important key to the meaning attached to the word *ṣiddīq* in the minds of the Arabs of those days. But the Koran itself must have something to say about it.

In the Koran this epithet is applied to the virgin Mary, the Prophet Idris, Abraham, Joseph, and more generally to all true believers. Let us examine here briefly our data one by one.

(1) Mary

The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than an Apostle, [just like other] Apostles who had passed away before him. And his mother was [simply] a *ṣiddīqah* [fem. form of *ṣiddīq*]. They both ate [ordinary] food. (V. 79)

The purport of this passage is to deprive Jesus and his mother, the virgin Mary, of the halo of divine sanctity as essentially incompatible with the idea of the absolute Oneness of God, and to declare that they both were no more than simple mortals who ate food like other mortals. The only point in which they differed from common people was that Jesus was one of the Apostles of God, i. e. the Prophets, and Mary was an eminently virtuous woman. As to the exact meaning in which we should understand the word *ṣiddīqah* the context does not afford practically any explanation. We are left embarrassingly at liberty to interpret it in terms of truth-speaking, trustworthiness, or honesty.

(2) Joseph

'Joseph, thou *ṣiddīq*! Give us your opinion on [the strange dream] ..... so that I may return to the people and let them know [the truth]' (XII, 46)

The king of Egypt saw in a dream seven fat cows devouring seven lean ones, and also seven green ears of corn with seven withered. Greatly troubled, he asked the expounders of dreams to interpret for him the symbolical meaning of these

strange dreams. But no one could. A young man who had once been a fellow-prisoner of Joseph was suddenly reminded of the unusual capacity of the latter for oneiromancy; he hurries to the prison and addresses him with these words. Usually it is taken for granted that the word *ṣiddīq* in this passage means 'veracious'. Is the word meant to refer to the previous experience of the young man — i. e. to the fact that the interpretation of a dream concerning his future course of life, which Joseph had given him, really came true — so that it denotes a 'man who spoke the truth'? Or does it, more generally, mean the quality of veraciousness itself? Or, again, does it mean 'trustworthy' or 'trustworthy because of unquestionable veracity'? At all events there remains a considerable amount of uncertainty about the real meaning of the word.

The following example which concerns Abraham is of a particular importance semantically, for the whole passage forms, as it were, a very detailed explanation of why he came to be called a *ṣiddīq*. True, it is not a real verbal definition, but at least it gives us a clue as to what kind of conduct was entitled in the mind of Muhammad to this honorific.

(3) Abraham

And mention in this Book [i. e. Koran] the affair of Abraham; verily, he was a *ṣiddīq*, a Prophet.

He said to his father, 'O my father, why dost thou worship that which can neither hear nor see nor avail thee aught? O my father, I have received knowledge such as thou hast not received yet. So follow me, and I will guide thee to a straight path.

'O my father, worship not Satan; verily, Satan has ever been rebellious against the Merciful God. O my father, verily, I fear that there may smite thee some chastisement from the Merciful God, so that thou shouldst become a client of Satan.' He [father] said, 'What! art thou averse from my gods, Abraham? Stop, or surely I shall have to stone thee to death. Rather, get thee gone from me for a while.'

He [Abraham] said, 'Fare thee well, then! I will ask forgiveness for thee from my Lord; verily He has ever been benevolent to me. I will go away from you and all these things [i. e. idols] that you pray apart from God. My Lord I will pray. In praying [only] to my Lord I think I shall never be unfortunate'. (XIX, 42-49)

Here we see Abraham described as a determined champion for monotheism against the surrounding forces of idolatrous polytheism; a zealous and fearless believer in the one God, who remains loyal to the last to his religion even if he is forced thereby to part with his own father and condemned to exile. Such is a man who is

fully entitled to the surname of *ṣiddiq*. It will be clear that this passage helps us forward a step towards clearness in understanding the semantic core of the word. In the next example the same word, presumably with the same meaning, is applied to the true believers in general. It should be noticed as a fact of particular relevance that the *ṣiddiq* are here opposed to the *kāfir*.

(4) Muslims in general

Those who believe in God and His Apostles, they are the *ṣiddiqūna* [pl. of *ṣiddiq*] and martyrs in the view of their Lord; for them is an appropriate reward and they have their light. Those, on the contrary, who have shown themselves *kāfir* and cried lies to Our signs, they are the inhabitants of Hell. (LVII, 18)

In the saying of Abū Bakr which I quoted earlier (p. 83) we saw *ṣidq* opposed to *kadhīb* and, through this latter, to *khiyānah* ('treacherousness'). Now if *ṣidq* in the sense of remaining unswervingly true to one's promise, oath, treaty, covenant, and the like, constitutes such a high moral quality, it is only natural that its opposite, *khiyānah* should be considered one of the most sinful qualities man can ever possess. In Islam no less than in the Jahiliyyah the act of treachery was an atrocious sin, and a man qualified by such a property was abhorred like a viper.

If thou fearest treachery (*khiyānah*) from any folk [with whom thou art in treaty], then throw it back to them [i.e. dissolve the treaty without compunction] in fairness. For verily, God loves not the treacherous (*khā'inīna* pl. of *khā'in*, lit. 'those who are prone to *khiyānah*'). (VIII, 60)

In the following passage in which the integrity of Joseph is confessed through the very lips of the wife of Egyptian Governor, we see *khā'in* 'treacherous' standing significantly in opposition to *ṣādiq*, a fact which, by the way, goes to confirm the view that *ṣādiq* in this context means a man who remains loyal and true to the plight of master and servant.

Said the wife of the Governor, 'At last the truth (*ḥaqq* — for this word see above, p. 81) is out! Yes, it is I who tempted him. He [Joseph] is surely a *ṣādiq*.'  
[Then said Joseph,] '[All this has happened] in order that he [my master, the Egyptian Governor] may know that I betrayed (*khāna* verbal form corresponding to *khiyānah*) him not behind his back, and that God guides not the evil design of the *khā'in*.'

(XII, 51-52)

That the fact of treachery was, in the eye of Muhammad, an unpardonable sin, whether in the sphere of ordinary life, i.e. between man and man, or in that of the monotheistic God and man, is clearly shown by the following example in which the two kinds of *khiyānah* appear side by side, and are placed under the divine ban equally.

O believers, betray not God and His Apostle, nor betray your trusts knowingly. (VIII, 27)

It goes without saying, however, that there is a great difference of degree in sinfulness between the *khiyānah* against man and the *khiyānah* against God. To realize this, it will be enough to remember that the most characteristic type of the latter kind of *khiyānah* is *nifāq* which denotes something like perfidy under the cover of hypocritical faith. Unlike the above-discussed *kufṛ* which, at least in its typical form, is not so much 'treachery' or 'betrayal' as downright refusal to enter into a covenant with God, or the open declaration of disbelief in God and hatred against Him, *nifāq* is to act treacherously in the midst of Islam, under the guise of piety.

As matter of fact, we have already met with *nifāq* in the participial form of *munāfiq*, (see above, p. 82). Briefly, *munāfiq* is one who is characterized by the abominable tendency towards exercising *nifāq* against God; one, that is, who, though outwardly a pious Muslim, remains at heart an infidel and reveals himself in the dark as an inexorable enemy of God and Muhammad. We might do well to recall also that in the passage quoted on page 82 *munāfiq* stood in antithesis to *ṣādiq*. Since, however, the topic of *nifāq* is so important for the specific purpose of this book as a whole as to warrant a much more detailed analysis, I shall leave the further discussion of this problem to a later more suitable occasion and bring this section to a close by simply quoting two characteristic passages which will throw further light on the meaning of *khiyānah* in the sphere of religion and faith.

Act not as a pleader for the treacherous (*khā'inīna*)..... and plead not on behalf of those who betray (*yakhtānūna* — also from *khiyānah*) themselves. Verily, God loves not anyone who is a sinful traitor (*khawwān*) (IV, 106-107)

The phrase 'who betray themselves' implies that those who act treacherously towards God are only being treacherous to themselves, because in the final resort their *khiyānah* comes back upon their own heads. As to the word *khawwān*, rendered here provisionally as 'traitor', we might remark that it is a *mubālaghah* (exaggeration)-form of *khā'in*, denoting one who is characterized by an exceeding degree of treacherousness, one who, as al-Baiḍāwī put it, persists in doing acts of treachery



and perfidy. It is noteworthy, moreover, that the word is here placed in further emphasis by the addition of another word, *athim* 'sinful'. About this latter term much will have to be said at a later stage.

Surely God will defend those who believe, Surely God loves not  
any ingrate traitor (*khawwān*). (XXII, 39)

Here again one who proves unfaithful to the covenant with God is called by the same strong term *khawwān*. But this time it is accompanied not by 'sinful', but by a much more forcible word *kafūr* which is also an emphatic epithet derived from the root *KFR*, and means 'extremely, or habitually ungrateful'.

There appears in the Koran another word for 'traitor', which is no less forcible than *khawwān*: that is *khattār*, an emphatic epithet from *khatr*, which means one who acts 'with the foulest perfidy, treachery, or unfaithfulness' (Lane, *Lex.* p. 701). It is interesting to observe that this word, too, is found in the Koran accompanied by *kafūr*. The parallelism of outer structure seems to give evidence that *khattār* and *khawwān*, although belonging to two entirely unrelated roots, are the nearest possible synonyms of each other in every respect, whether in meaning, structure, or emotive force.

<i>kullu</i>	<i>khawwānin</i>	<i>kafūrin</i>
(every)	(foulest traitor)	(ungrateful)
<i>kullu</i>	<i>khattārin</i>	<i>kafūrin</i>
(every)	(foulest traitor)	(ungrateful)

The passage in question is Surah XXXI, 31, where we are reminded of certain thankless people who, when they are overtaken by a storm on the sea, call on God being utterly sincere in their piety, but as soon as God saves them to the shore, forget all this and begin to act inimically against God.

Hast thou not seen how the ships run upon the sea by God's favor...?  
When waves like darkness cover them, they pray to God making  
their belief in Him quite sincere, but as soon as He saves them to  
the shore, some amongst them become cool and indifferent. No  
one, however, could deny our signs, except every ingrate traitor.

I should like to add that al-Baiḍāwī, commenting on the word *khattār* in this example makes a very interesting remark: that it means *ghaddār* i. e. the most villainous traitor, and that those who do acts of the kind here described are called 'traitors' because the denial of the divine signs is in the last resort an act of treachery and unfaithfulness to religion as the 'natural covenant'. This is indeed a valuable

piece of confirmatory evidence for my argument that *ṣidq* ↔ *khiyānah* should be assessed primarily in terms of Covenant between God and His people. Even where there is no explicit mention of a formal covenant, there always is palpable a certain undercurrent of this idea, which tends to give a very peculiar ethical coloring to the meanings of these words.

#### IV Veracity (*ṣidq*) ~ Falsehood (*kadhib*)

As I noted above we discern in the semantic category of *ṣidq* two different, though closely related, aspects: (1) veracity or truth-speaking, and (2) faithfulness (to one's promise, treaty, or covenant). In the latter half of the foregoing section we have concentrated our attention on the second aspect. Now it is time that we turned to the first to see if Islam has something peculiar to say about this old virtue of the desert.

That truth-speaking was considered as an eminent virtue among the desert Arabs in the Jahiliyyah will be clear without any lengthy discussion. Besides, it is so in all peoples, so far as I am aware. It is the commonest, most ordinary sort of human virtue, and as such it does not seem to offer any problem of particular interest. In the Koran, however, it assumes a very remarkable peculiarity, and this point will leap to the eye when we approach the problem from its negative side, i. e. the sin of lying.

We may do well to mind again an important point which was casually referred to in an earlier passage: namely, that 'truth' is fundamentally a relationship between two poles, *ṣidq* — *ḥaqq*. We have seen there that *ḥaqq* represents the specifically objective side of the truth, and that language can be 'true' only when it conforms to it. 'Truth' as a subjective affair, then, consists in using language in such a way as to make it correspond with *ḥaqq*, the reality. This point begins to assume a tremendous significance when we turn to the problem of truth-speaking in matters that concern the religious relationship between God and man. For according to the Koran, the Revelation is nothing other than *ḥaqq*, and God Himself is the absolute *Ḥaqq*. It is significant that in either case *ḥaqq* is opposed to *bāṭil* which means something essentially groundless, 'vanity' or 'falsehood'.

##### (1) God as the Truth or Reality

God is the Truth, whereas what they [i. e. the idolaters] call upon  
apart from Him is nothing but unreality (*bāṭil*)

(XXII, 61; also XXXI, 29)

*Bāṭil* in this passage clearly refers to the idols which the pagan Arabs worshipped alongside of Allah. And since idols are, in the eye of Muhammad, nothing but an

absurd invention of the 'human caprice', a groundless fable, mere names, it will be evident that he means by the 'Truth' (*ḥaqq*) something pre-eminently real, a real living force which is operating at any moment in the very process of life and death in the world of existence. This point is brought out particularly well by the following example in which, through a very detailed description of the process whereby each one of the human beings is created from dust and grows up from a drop of congealed blood into a well-shaped infant, it is suggested that the same God who has the power of creating man from nothingness has also the power of causing the final resurrection.

All this [wonderful process of creation] is possible because God *is* the Truth, and is [able to] bring the lifeless to life, and is able to do everything. (XXII, 6)

In the next example, too, the All-powerfulness of God in administering the human affairs is greatly emphasized, and is made the evidence for His being really the Real. The reality-quality of God, in other words, is grasped chiefly in terms of His grand creative activity.

Say, 'Who furnishes you with your provision from heaven and earth? Who can really hear and really see? Who brings forth the living from the lifeless and the lifeless from the living? Who administer all these affairs?'

They will reply, 'It is God'.

Then say at once, 'Are you not afraid [of Him]? Lo! such is God, your Lord, the Truth. And what is there beyond truth, but error? How then can you turn about?' (X, 32-33)

## (2) Revelation as the Truth or Reality

They [i. e. the disbelievers] say: 'He [Muhammad] is only possessed by a devil. 'Nay, but he has brought them the Truth (*ḥaqq*), but most of them dislike the Truth. And had the Truth followed their caprices, the heavens and the earth and all those who are therein would have surely been corrupted. (XXIII, 72-73)

The verse 72 refers to the fact that Muhammad, particularly at the outset of his prophetic career, was often regarded by his compatriots as a sort of madman, *majnūn* — literally, a man attacked and possessed by some *jinn* or invisible spirit, of whose existence Muhammad himself did not doubt. The passage denies this mephatically and declares that Muhammad, far from being a *majnūn*, is a Prophet

of God, who has brought the divine message, which is the 'Truth'. In a similar way, this 'Truth' was often reviled and laughed at as sheer 'magic' *sihr*.

The *kāfir*, when the Truth reaches them, say of it, 'This is naught but sheer magic. (XXXVI, 42)

Before the tenacious, vigorous onslaught of the *kāfir*, even Muhammad, so it appears, had to waver sometimes; he was driven into anxiety and doubt as to the real source of the mysterious voice which dictated to him the messages to deliver. In the two following passages God Himself assures Muhammad of the never-to-be-doubted Truth-quality of the divine message.

[This is] the Truth from thy Lord, so be thou never of those who doubt and waver. (III, 53)

Those unto whom We gave the Scripture [before this, i.e. the Jewish people who know what Revelation is] recognize it [i.e. the Koran] as they recognize their own sons. And yet, a party of them conceal the Truth knowingly. [This is] the Truth from thy Lord, so be thou not of those who doubt and waver .....

If thou followest their groundless imagination when the [true] knowledge has thus come to thee, then no doubt thou wilt be one of the wrong-doers. (II, 141-142, 140)

In a number of other passages the Jews are severely accused of confounding the truth with vanity and concealing the truth on purpose. '[O children of Israel], confound not truth with vanity (*bāṭil*); conceal not the truth knowingly' (II, 39). 'O people of the Scripture, why do you confound the truth with vanity and conceal the truth knowingly?' (III, 64).

If in this way the Revelation through the mouthpiece of Muhammad is the Truth, then it follows of course that the religion based on this revelation, that is, Islam, is also the Truth. In this sense, too, the word *ḥaqq* is constantly used in opposition to *bāṭil*.

Say, 'Is there amongst your associates [i.e. the idols whom you worship alongside of Allah in the capacity of His associates] any that guides you to the Truth?'

Say, 'It is God [alone] who guides to the Truth. Is He who guides to the Truth worthier to be followed, or he who guides not unless he himself is guided? What is the matter with you, then? How do you judge?' (X, 36)

Say, 'The Truth has come and vanity has vanished. Surely vanity is ever bound to vanish'. (XVII, 83)

The upshot of all this is that a particular sacrosanctity is attributed in the Koran to the word 'Truth' *ḥaqq*, and, consequently, all use of language which contradicts it in any way is considered to be glaring blasphemy against God and His religion. It is not at all surprising, then, that we find *kadhib* 'falsehood' or lying' talked of in the Koran as almost another word for heinousness, for it constitutes one of the most salient features of what we already know is the greatest of all sins, *kufr* 'unbelief'. As we shall presently see in the following chapter, *kāfir* is essentially characterized by the trait of *kadhib*.

Now, *Kadhib* as such a blasphemous attitude towards God manifests itself mainly in two different ways. In the first place, it manifests itself as an open act of lying on the part of man in matters that concern God and religion: rank forgery of revelations, 'divine' laws, and 'sacred' stories, etc. Secondly, it may take the form of 'crying lies' (*takdhīb*) to the real Revelation of God: it is, then, a more direct kind of attack against God and His Apostle, being as it is not only a flat refusal to accept the Truth when it is sent down, but also even more positively the assuming of the attitude of mockery and hostility against it. I propose to begin with the second case.

### I *Takdhīb*

*Takdhīb* is the infinitive of the so-called second verbal form, *kadhhaba*, from the root *K-DH-B*, and means literally to 'make, or declare, something a lie.' So in the specific contexts of a revealed religion, it denotes the characteristic attitude of those stubborn unbelievers who persist in their refusal to accept all revelations as really coming from some divine source, and never cease to laugh at them as mere old folks' tales.

Whenever a sign of their Lord comes to them they turn away from it. They [always] cried lies (*kadhhabū*) to the Truth (*ḥaqq*) when it came to them, but there shall come to them news of that which they were laughing at [i.e. news of the terrible divine punishment]. (V, 5)

The phrase 'that which they were laughing at (*yastahzi'ūna*)' describes, as is evident in different terms the same thing as the phrase 'they cried lies to', and thus throws a strong light on the mental attitude underlying the act of *takdhīb*. *Istihzā'* or 'mockery' is the fundamental state of mind of those who deny the revealed Truth.

Nay, I swear by the falling of the stars:..... This is surely a noble Koran..... a revelation sent down from the Lord of the worlds. How dare you make light of this discourse? Do you make a living by crying lies [to it]? (LVI, 74, 76, 79-81)

God tries to console in gentle, soothing words the Apostle who is now on the brink of utter despair on account of this ruthless *takdhīb* by the Meccan infidels, and assures him that he is not the only prophet to suffer this kind of terrible persecution, but, rather, such has ever been the destiny of all prophets.

If they cry lies to thee, even so did the people of Noah before them cry lies [to Our Apostles], and Ad and Thamud, and the people of Abraham, the people of Lot, and the men of Midian, too. Moses also was cried lies to [Every time] I indulged these *kāfirs* for a while, then suddenly I seized them. And how terrible it was! (XXII, 43; also XXII, 56)

The people of Noah cried lies before them. They cried lies to Our servant and said, 'A man possessed by *jinn*!' And he was repulsed. (LIV, 9)

[The people of] Thamud cried lies to the [divine] warnings, and said, 'What, shall we follow a simple mortal, from amongst us? Then indeed we should be in error and madness!' (LIV, 23-24)

We are well aware that it grieves thee deeply, what they say. Yet [in reality] it is not thee they cry lies to, it is the signs [i.e. revelations] of God that they deny, these evil-doers! (VI, 33)

It is noteworthy that in this passage those who cry lies to the divine signs are called 'evil-doers' (*ẓālimin*) — an important value-word in the Koran to which reference has already been made (cf. p. 21). *Takdhīb* is thus a piece of *ẓulm* 'evil', 'wrong', or 'injustice'. This point is made more evident by the following example.

Who is more wrongful (*āẓlam* — comparative of *ẓālim*, i.e. who does greater evil) than he who cries lies to the signs of God and turns away from them? (VI, 158)

Because it is the greatest possible injustice against God, it is worthy to be punished with the severest possible torment. God promises Muhammad that He will surely smite the evil-doers with ruin and destruction in requital of such an outrage,

as it has always been His wont to do so in the past. We may do well to remark that *takdhīb* is also called sometimes by still stronger terms than *ẓulm*, such as *fisq* 'ungodliness' and *jurm* 'sin' or 'crime'.

[Concerning a past event]

And there came to them an Apostle from amongst them [i.e. one of them was chosen by God to be His Apostle], but they called him a liar. So the [divine] punishment seized them, while they indulged in the wrong-doing. (XVI, 114)

Say, 'Travel in the earth, and see how has been the end of those who cried lies' (VI, 11)

Those who cry lies to Our signs, the punishment shall be inflicted upon them, for that they have indulged in such ungodliness (*yaf-suqūna* from *fisq*). (VI, 49)

If they cry lies to thee, say, 'Your Lord is a possessor of all-embracing mercy, but His violent wrath will never be turned back from the sinful people (*mujrimīna* — from *jurm*). (VI, 148)

In this respect, those who cry lies to God's signs and call His Apostle an 'impudent liar' (*kadhībun ashirun* — LIV, 25) are not doing any wrong to God and His Apostle, but they are wronging themselves unwittingly.

Evil indeed is the likeness of a people who cry lies to our signs, for themselves it is that they wrong. (VII, 176)

## II *Iftirā'*

If, as we have just seen, *takdhīb* 'crying lies to God (His Revelation, and His Apostle)' is downright blasphemy against Him, it is a more subtle kind of ungodliness to invent groundless fables and to make a show of them as if they came from a divine source. *Iftirā'* is the word for such an act of forgery. It is a verb and is usually accompanied by the word *kadhīb* which is by now familiar to us, as its 'direct object' — *Iftarā[y] kadhīban* (or *ifkan*) meaning 'he forged a lie'. Those who commit the *iftirā'* do in fact no smaller wrong than those who flatly deny God's signs, for it is plain that they are attempting thereby to forge 'divine' signs themselves. So it is no surprise to us to find that the act of *iftirā'* is condemned and censured in the Koran in exactly the same terms as *takdhīb*. Those who show a marked tendency towards *iftirā'* concerning God are accused of *ẓulm* and of *jurm*.

Often they are lumped together with those characterized by *takdhīb*, and are condemned at one stroke.

[*ẓulm*]

Who does greater wrong (*azlam*, see above, p. 93) than he who forges a lie against God or cries lies to His signs? (VII, 35)

Who does greater wrong than he who forges a lie against God when he is being summoned unto self-surrender (*islām*)? God guides not people who are wrongdoing (*ẓālimīna*) (LXI, 7)

[*jurm*]

Who does greater wrong than he who forges a lie against God or cries lies to His signs? Verily, the sinful (*mujrimūna*) will never prosper. (X, 18)

The people of *takdhīb* and those of *iftirā'* are all alike *ẓālim* and *mujrim*. The semantic relationship between *iftirā'* and *jurm* is perceivable particularly clearly in the following passage. It alludes to the story of Noah which is related in detail in the Koran. The Meccan infidels, when they heard Muhammad giving an account of the legendary event of Noah's Ark, said that it was nothing but an invention, a forgery of the Apostle. The passage is a reply to this accusation.

Do they say, 'He has forged it'? Say, 'If it is my forgery, upon my own head be my sin (*ijrāmī* — lit. 'my act of *jurm*') But I am innocent of the sins you are accustomed to do (*tujrimūna*, also from *jurm*). (XI, 37)

Incidentally the passage just quoted brings out a very interesting point; namely, that, viewed from the standpoint of the *kāfirs* themselves, it was precisely what Muhammad was preaching that deserved really to be called *iftirā'*. The teaching of the Koran as a whole was in their eyes a grand-scale forgery, which was deliberately calculated to turn them away from the age-old i.e. sacred, tribal customs and beliefs.

When Our signs, that is, clear revelations, are recited unto them, they say, 'This is naught else than a man who wishes to turn you away from what your fathers used to worship'. And again, 'This is naught else than a monstrous lie (*ifk*) of his invention'.

(XXXIV, 42)

Those who are *kāfir* say, 'This is naught else than a lie (*ifk*) which he [i.e. Muhammad] has forged, and other people have helped him in the forgery'. They have committed in this way wrong and falsehood. They also say, '[These are but] fairy-tales of the old folk which he has had written down; they are recited to him morning and evening.' (XXV, 5-6)

[The *kāfirs* say,] 'Never, never believe what you are promised! [This is said in reference to the Islamic doctrine of Resurrection after death]. There is naught else than our present life. We die, we live, and we shall not be raised. He [i.e. Muhammad] is naught else than a man who has forged a lie [*iftarā(y)*] ..... *kadhiban*] against God. We believe him not'. (XXIII, 38-40)

Against this accusation of forgery Muhammad emphasized repeatedly that the message he brought to men was the Truth (*ḥaqq*) from his Lord.

Do they say, 'He [i.e. Muhammad] has forged it'? Nay, but it is the Truth from thy Lord, that thou mayest give warnings to a people to whom no warner came before thee, that haply they may find the right way. (XXXII, 2)

It [i.e. the story of Joseph] is not a forged tale, but a confirmation of what exists [i.e. the older Scripture] and an interpretation of everything, and a guidance, and a mercy for a people who believe. (XII, 111)

As to what is meant concretely by Muhammad under the words *iftirā*, *kadhib*, and *ifk*, we have to say that it varies according to the specific context in each case. But there can be no doubt that most representative of *iftirā* are (1) idolatry, and (2) the 'sacred' customs connected with the idolatrous worship of the Jahiliyyah.

Verily, those who have taken to themselves the Calf, wrath shall smite them from their Lord, and there shall overtake them abasement [even] in the life of the present world. For such is the reward We confer upon those who indulge in forgery (*muftarina* — pl. of *muftarī* — he who is addicted to *iftirā*). (VII, 151)

This is said in reference to Moses' folk who, in his absence, made a golden calf and began to worship this idol instead of God. It is clear that the word *muftarina* denotes the idol-worshippers. From the point of view of Muhammad, idolatry is an obvious form of the 'forging of a lie', because it means to invent out of sheer

fantasy strange beings and attribute to them reality in an entirely unwarrantable way, when, in truth, 'reality' belongs to God alone. The same word *muftarī* appears in the following passage with exactly the same meaning.

And unto the people of Ad [We sent] their brother [i.e. one of their fellow-countrymen] Hud. He said, 'O my people, worship God. You have no other god save Him. Verily, you are only *muftarūna*.' (XI, 52)

As is well-known, life in the Jahiliyyah was regulated by an elaborate and intricate system of taboos and commandments that were prescribed by traditional customs. 'This is *ḥarām* (forbidden), and this is *ḥalāl* (lawful)'. And this system of *ḥarām* — *ḥalāl* was imposed upon all men in the name of sacrosanctity. For Muhammad, this of course constituted an unmistakable case of forgery against God, for He alone is really entitled to the authority of enforcing upon men any rules of conduct in the name of religion. Thus it comes about that in the Koran the 'sacred' customs of the Jahiliyyah are frequently condemned in the strongest terms as being 'forged lies' against God.

You should not say of the lie (*kadhib*) which your own tongues describe, "This is lawful, and this is forbidden." This is to forge a lie against God. Verily, those who forge against God a lie shall not prosper. (XVI, 117)

They [i. e. the idolaters] pretend, 'These cattle and tilth are sacrosanct; none shall eat thereof, save such as we please' — so they pretend — 'and cattle there are whose backs are forbidden, and cattle over which the name of God is not to be mentioned.' All this is forgery (*iftirā*) against God. He will surely reward them for what they have forged. (VI, 139)

Sometimes sorcery is also called *iftirā*. The example which follows refers to the act of the sorcerers of Egypt who, in the presence of Pharaoh, wished to compete with Moses in the art of sorcery.

Moses said unto them, 'woe unto you! Forge not a lie against God, lest He destroy you with punishment. All those who have forged have ever failed.' (XX, 63-64)

Exactly the same thing is meant in another passage by *ifk*. 'That which they were forging' refers to the rods and ropes which the sorcerers had transformed



by sorcery into living snakes.

Then did Moses throw his rod, and lo! it swallowed that which they were forging (*ya'fikūna* — a verbal form from *ifk*)

(XXVI, 44)

As regards this latter term, *ifk*, we might remark that we have a good example of its 'secular' usage (cf. p. 37) in Surah XXIV. It means a 'slander' or 'disquieting, false rumor' among the people about the moral integrity of a certain person; we may note that it is here rebuked as an act involving *ithm* 'sin'.

Surely those who have spread this false rumor (*ifk*) are a gang of you. But reckon it not evil for you [that this has occurred]; rather it will prove good for you. For each one of them shall have to bear the burden of the sin he has earned. As for him among them who took for himself the greater share of it, there awaits him a mighty punishment.

Wherefor, when you heard it, did the believers, man and women alike, not think in a good way and say, 'This is obviously a slander (*ifk*)'? ..... Wherefor, when you heard it, did you not say, 'It is not for us to talk about this. Glory be to Thee! This is indeed a mighty calumny (*buhṭān*)'

(XXIV, 11-12, 14)

This *buhṭān* is another word for 'slander' or 'false accusation'. One sees from the context itself that it is a synonym of *ifk*. This is confirmed further by the fact that *buhṭān* also bears an intimate relationship to *ithm* 'sin'.

Those who hurt the believers, whether men or women, [by accusing them] of what they have not earned, those must bear the burden of calumny (*buhṭān*) and obvious sin (*ithm*). (XXXIII, 58)

*Affāk* is an emphatic form from the same root as *ifk* and denotes one who is characteristically addicted to the sin of spreading false rumors: a habitual big liar. In Surah XXVI, this word is applied to those who eagerly listen to the devils' whispering and utter all sorts of absurd things. Most presumably this refers to the seers (*kāhin*) in the desert, who pretended to receive esoteric knowledge from some supernatural sources. Note that, here too, *ifk* happens to be accompanied by *ithm*, and also that the *affāk* is made equivalent in the same passage to *kādhīb* 'one who utters lies'.

Shall I tell you upon whom the devils descend? They only descend upon the sinful (*athim*, from *ithm*) *affāk*. They listen to [the devils' voice], but most them are liars (*kādhīb*). (XXVI, 221-222)

The preceding account does not in any way pretend to exhaust the pre-Islamic moral ideas that were adopted by Muhammad into the Islamic conception of morality; we know that there were many other 'good qualities' that originally formed part of the ethics of the desert. But these, I believe, will more profitably be touched upon from time to time as occasion arises in the course of the subsequent chapters.

## Chapter VIII

## THE GRAND MORAL DICHOTOMY

Say, 'Listen, kāfirs! I worship not what you worship.  
 You are not worshipping what I worship.  
 I am not worshipping what you worship.  
 Nor will you worship what I worship.  
 To you your religion, and to me my religion!' (CIX, 1-6)

These words mark in an almost dramatic way the most radical break with the surrounding polytheism, to which Muhammad was led by his fundamental attitude in religious matters. This was, so to speak, the formal declaration of independence on the part of Islam from all that was essentially incompatible with the monotheistic belief which it proclaimed. In the domain of ethical practices, this declaration of independence involved a grave consequence. It suggested that henceforward all human values were to be measured by an absolutely reliable standard of evaluation.

The Koranic outlook divides all human qualities into two radically opposed categories, which,—in view of the fact that they are too vague and semantically too pregnant to be called 'good' and 'bad', or 'right' and 'wrong'—we might simply call the class of positive (moral) properties and the class of negative (moral) properties, respectively. The final yardstick by which this bipartite division is carried out is the belief in the one and only God, the creator of all beings. In fact, throughout the whole Koran there runs the keynote of dualism regarding moral value of man: the grand dualism of believer and unbeliever. In this sense, the ethical system of Islam is of a very simple structure. For by the ultimate yardstick of 'belief — unbelief' one can easily decide to which of the two categories a given person or a given act belongs.

The significance of this fact, however, was very great for the moral development of the Arabic people, because it meant the first appearance of a moral principle, which was consistent enough to deserve the name of 'principle'. A whole practical code of conduct, though as yet largely unsystematic, was imposed upon the believer, the moment he truly believed in the oneness of God and the truth of the prophetic message. As I remarked earlier, this was an unprecedented event in the spiritual history of the Arabs. In the Jahiliyyah there were, we have seen, a number of recognized moral values. But they were just there as *membra disjecta*, without any definite underlying principle to support them; they were based almost exclusively on an irrational sort of moral emotion, or rather, a blind and violent passion for the mode of life that had been handed down from generation to generation as

a priceless tribal asset. Islam made it possible for the first time for the Arabs to judge and evaluate all human conduct with reference to a theoretically justifiable moral principle.

The basic dichotomy of moral properties to which I have just referred, appears in the Koranic verses in a number of varied forms. It may, to begin with, assume the form of an essential opposition between *kāfir* and *mu'min* 'believer'.

It is He who created you. But one of you is a *kāfir*, and one of you is a *mu'min*. God sees everything you do. (LXIV, 2)

Those who misbelieve (*kafarū*, a verbal form corresponding to *kāfir*) and turn men away from the way of God, He will surely make all their works vain and futile.

Those, on the contrary, who believe (*āmanū* a verbal form corresponding to *mu'min*) and do good works and believe in what is revealed unto Muhammad inasmuch as it is the Truth from their Lord, He will surely remit from them their ill-deeds and improve their minds. All this is because those who misbelieve (*kafarū*) have adopted falsehood (*bāṭil*) whereas those who believe (*āmanū*) have adopted the Truth (*ḥaqq*) from their Lord [for the opposition between *bāṭil* and *ḥaqq* see above, p. 89] (XLVII, 1-3)

It may also take the form of an opposition between *kāfir* and *muttaqī* 'he who fears' or 'godfearing'. The religious meaning of 'fear' (*taqwā*[y]) in Islam was elucidated in Chap. VI.

Verily, this [Koran] is a reminder to the *muttaqīna* (pl. of *muttaqī*), but We know that there are amongst you some who cry lies to it. Verily, it is a cause of sorrow to the *kāfirīna*, although in reality it is the absolute Truth. (LXIX, 48-50)

Or it may take the form of an opposition between *muslim* 'he who has surrendered' (for the meaning of this word, see above, p. 61) and *mujrīm* 'sinful' or 'guilty' (for the analysis of this word, see Chap. XIII).

Shall We treat the *muslimīna* in the same way as the *mujrimīna*? (LXVIII, 55)

Or, as an opposition between *dālī* 'he who goes astray, errs' and *muhtadī* 'he who is guided, who goes the right way'.

Verily, thy Lord knows best who goes astray from His way, as  
He knows best those who are guided. (LXVIII, 35)

Or again, the 'positive' side may be called 'the fellows of the Fire' or 'the fellows of the Left' (see p. 60) and the 'negative' side 'the fellows of Paradise' or 'the fellows of the Right'.

Not equal are the fellows of the Fire and the fellows of Paradise.  
The fellows of Paradise, they alone are the blissful. (LIX, 20)

As we shall see later, this fundamental dichotomy of human properties appears in still many other forms. But they are all rather marginal variations within the bounds of the essential opposition between belief and unbelief; the most basic fact remains always the same.

Sometimes, Muhammad seems to divide men into not two but three classes, recognizing an intermediate state hovering so to speak between both ends. This middle ground where belief and unbelief overlap and fuse, is formed by those who remain very lukewarm in their faith although they have formally accepted Islam and become Muslims.

We conferred the Book [of Revelation] as an inheritance upon those whom We chose of Our servants. But of them some there are who wrong themselves [by rejecting it and crying lies to it], and of them are some who are lukewarm [though they have accepted it outwardly], and, again there are some who vie in good works by the leave of God. (XXXV, 29)

We should remark that it was mostly the nomadic Arabs of the desert that formed this middle class, though of course there were among the city-dwellers, too, people who remained lukewarm and always wavering between belief and *kufr*. 'L'arabe,' says Dozy, 'n'est pas religieux de sa nature, et, sous ce rapport, il y a entre lui et les autres peuples qui ont adopté l'islamisme une énorme différence. .... Voyez les Bédouins d'aujourd'hui! Quoique musulmans de nom, ils se soucient médiocrement des préceptes de l'islamisme.....En tout temps, il a été extrêmement difficile de vaincre chez les Bédouins leur tiédeur pour la religion'. (*op. cit.* p. 13, 24). The Koran itself attests to this. In a remarkable passage where the basic difference between *mu'min* 'believer' and *Muslim* is brought out most clearly, it is declared that the Bedouin who have accepted Islam are not to be regarded, in virtue of that fact alone, as having become *mu'min* in the true sense of the word.

The desert Arabs assert, 'We have become believers'. Tell them, 'You do not believe yet; rather say, "We have surrendered [i. e. we have become *muslims*]". For the [true] faith has not yet penetrated into your hearts. But in so far as you yield obedience to God and His Apostle, He will not withhold from you the reward of your deeds. God is forgiving, and merciful.

The [true] believers are those only who, after having believed in God and His Apostle, never doubt, but strive with their wealth and lives in the way of God. Those only are the faithful believers (*ṣādiq*, see above, Chap. VII). (XLIX, 14-15)

It must be admitted, nevertheless, that, semantically at least the class of such doubtful 'Muslims' is after all but a border-line case, whose value is to be determined in terms of either the one extreme or the other of the common scale running from the true belief to downright unbelief. The existence of those lukewarm believers in a great number was no doubt a tough practical problem to solve for Muhammad himself, but there can be no doubt that they did not come to constitute in any way an independent semantic category. In the eyes of Muhammad, they were in the last resort a variation of the positive class. They represented, in other words, an imperfect type of the believer; but yet believers in the sense that they obeyed—at least outwardly—God and His Apostle, and as such, they were not to be denied the reward of their deeds.

Now before we proceed to the detailed analysis of the words standing for the most representative ethical properties, both positive and negative, which are recognized as such in the Koran, perhaps we may do well to make a more general survey of the characteristic features of the two fundamental types of men formed by various combinations of these properties. In more plain language we might formulate our problem by asking: (1) What—according to the teaching of the Koran—should a man do in order that he might be sure to win the reward of Paradise?; and, (2) What lines of conduct are characteristic of those who are bound to go to the torment of Hell? What, in other terms, is the ideal type of the believer, and what are the representative features of the infidel? By analyzing some of the relevant passages, we may hope to isolate in a preliminary way the principal ethical categories which must be taken up one by one in the subsequent chapters to be analyzed in detail from the specific point of view of this book.

## I The Fellows of Paradise

In Surah LXX, 20-35, there is given a detailed description of the conditions, the fulfilment of which is deemed strictly necessary if one desires really to be in

the number of 'those who will be allowed to live in Heavenly Gardens, high-honored'. There it is stated that the reward of Paradise is promised only to those worshippers:

- (1) 'who remain constant at their prayers and observe them well (v. 23, 34)',
- (2) 'in whose wealth there is an acknowledged portion for the beggar and the destitute (v. 24)',
- (3) 'who believe the Day of Judgment to be true (v. 27)',
- (4) 'who are fearful of the chastisement of their Lord (v. 27)',
- (5) 'who guard their pudenda (v. 29)',
- (6) 'who keep faithfully their trusts and their covenant (v. 32)',
- (7) 'who perform their witnessings (v. 33)'.

So this passage enumerates as the conditions necessary for winning the approval of God, constant and devout worship, almsgiving, eschatological belief in the final Judgment, fear, sexual continence, faithfulness, and truthfulness. The first two items chiefly concern ritual; they are destined to develop later into two statutory duties of Islam, and to constitute, together with fasting, pilgrimage, and the profession of faith in the oneness of God, the so-called five Pillars (*arkān*) of the faith. The items (3) and (4) concern directly the central notion of 'fear' of which I have already given a detailed account in Chap. VI. The items (6) and (7) have also been fully discussed in the same chapter under the heading of *ṣidq*.

The Surah XIII, 20-23 gives a list of Islamic virtues which is substantially the same as the preceding one. Here is the whole passage in translation.

Those who fulfil the covenant with God, and break not the compact; who join what God has bidden to be joined; and dread their Lord and fear the evil reckoning; who remain patient, craving their Lord's countenance; and perform the prayer; and expend [in alms] of what We have provided them secretly and openly; and ward off evil with good—these shall have the recompense of the [eternal] abode, Gardens of Eden which they shall enter. (XIII, 20-23)

The only item which is new is *ṣabr*, 'patience', 'steadfastness' or 'endurance'. *Ṣabr* was a prominent virtue in desert conditions in the days of Jahiliyyah. It was part of the *shajā'ah* 'courage', of which I have given an explanation in the preceding chapter, or rather it was an essential ingredient of it. In the desert where the conditions of living were so harsh, every man was constantly demanded to show extraordinary patience and endurance if only for his mere existence and for the subsistence of his tribe. Physical strength was of course necessary, but it was

not enough; it had to be backed up by the spiritual energy of patience, the inflexible determination to stand by one's cause whatever might happen. It will be easily seen that *ṣabr* was a representative manly virtue of the warrior on the battlefield. There could be no courage without this virtue of *ṣabr*. To this Jahili virtue, too, Muhammad gave his characteristic twist, and made out of it a genuine Islamic virtue. 'O you who believe! Seek help in patience and prayer. Verily, God is with the patient.' (II, 148). 'Be thou patient. Verily, the ultimate issue shall be for those who fear [i.e. the pious believers] (XI, 51). 'Worship thou Him and be thou patient in His worship' (XIX, 66). But there is no need here to go into further detail about this problem, for we shall have to deal with the semantic structure of *ṣabr* at a later stage.

Patience is also given a place in the following list of the Islamic virtues which go to constitute the ideal type of Muslim.

- (1) Those who have surrendered, men and women alike (*muslim*).
  - (2) Those who believe, men and women alike (*mu'min*).
  - (3) Those who are truthful, men and women alike (*ṣādiq*).
  - (4) Those who are patient, men and women alike (*ṣābir*).
  - (5) Those who are humble, men and women alike (*khāsh*).
  - (6) Those who give alms willingly, men and women alike (*mutaṣaddiq*).
  - (7) Those who are punctilious in fasting, men and women alike (*ṣā'im*).
  - (8) Those who guard their pudenda, men and women alike (*ḥāfiẓ al-furūj*).
  - (9) Those who remember God constantly, men and women alike (*dhākir Allāh*).
- For them God has prepared forgiveness and mighty wage. (XXXIII, 35)

Thankfulness (*shukr*) and repentance (*taubah*) must be also added to this list if we are to make it more complete. These two elements are particularly made prominent in the next quotation from the Koran, which purports expressly to give an account of the characteristic features of the 'fellows of Paradise'. In this passage every true believer is charged to address when he reaches forty years, his Lord with the following words.

'My Lord, arouse me that I may be thankful (*ashkura* from *shukr*) for Thy favor wherewith Thou hast favored me and my parents, and that I may do good works that shall please Thee. Be Thou gracious unto me as regards my offspring. Lo, I have turned [repentant] unto Thee (*tubtu*, from *taubah*). Lo, I am of those who have surrendered (*muslimīna*)!'—Those are they from whom We accept the best part of what they have done, and overlook their evil deeds. They are amongst the fellows of Paradise.

(XLVI, 14-15)

The first of these two, 'thankfulness' *shukr* already fell to be considered closely in Chap. IV. It will come up again for consideration in the following chapter. As to the second element, 'repentance' or 'penitence' *taubah*, we might remark before everything that it is, as it were, a human counterpart of God's unfathomable mercy. God, although He is the terrible Lord of the Judgment Day, the most unyielding avenger of all evils done, is at the same time an infinitely merciful, and forgiving God. Throughout the whole Koran it is constantly emphasized that 'God turns (*yatūbu*, from *taubah*) towards whom He will. Verily, God is most forgiving (*ghafūr*), most merciful (*raḥīm*)!' (IX, 27). It is interesting to observe that the same word *taubah* means 'repentance' on the part of man, and 'forgiveness' on the part of God. Man 'turns' towards God in repentance, and God 'turns' towards man with His grace. There is clearly a correlative relationship of 'turning' between God and man, and this is reflected in the semantic behavior of the word *taubah*.

God's limitless goodness and grace extend even to those faithless believers who have fallen into the temptation to commit the most heinous sin against God, i. e. the sin of idolatry, provided that they repent of their evil ways and return to the faith. Thus, speaking of the people of Moses who worshipped the golden idol of Calf, it is said:

Verily, those who worshipped the Calf, the wrath of their Lord shall befall them, and abasement even in this present world, for such is Our reward for those who forge (*muftarī*). Nevertheless, those who, having done these evil deeds, repent (*tābū*) thereafter and believe, verily, the Lord is thereafter very forgiving and very merciful. (VII, 151-152)

So all believers are strongly enjoined to turn to God in sincere repentance. It may be that God will forgive them their previous sins which they have committed consciously or unconsciously. A truly repentant heart merits even the reward of Paradise.

O believers, turn (*tābū*) unto God in sincere repentance (*taubatan naṣūḥan*). It may be that your Lord will remit from you your evil deeds and let you enter gardens with rivers flowing underneath. (LXVI, 8)

The emphatic form from the same root, *tawwāb* is used very often. When applied to a man, it means 'one who repents very often'; when applied to God, it naturally means 'He who is wont to turn to sinners in forgiveness, who reverts very often from wrath to grace'. *Awwāb* is another word for one who repents frequently. This is the emphatic form from *AWB* which literally means 'to return'. He who

repents his sin 'returns' from his sin unto God. Unlike *tawwāb*, this word is not applied to God in the sense of 'forgiving'. *Awwāb* appears in the following passage.

[Upon the Day of Judgment] Paradise shall be brought nigh to the godfearing; [it will be there, before their very eyes,] not far off. 'This is what you were promised. [It is] for all heedful ones who have returned very often (*aiwāb*).

He who fears the Merciful God and brings a repentant (*munīb*) heart: 'Enter it [i.e. Paradise] in peace! This is the day of immortality. (L, 30-33)

In this quotation we find one more word with approximately the same meaning, *munīb*. This is the participial form of the verb *anāba* meaning 'to return [unto God] repentant' with an additional implication of 'from time to time', the original meaning of the root (according to the Arab lexicographers) being that of 'doing something by turns' or 'coming to someone time after time'.

## II The Fellows of Hell

Having seen the main qualities which go to form the Islamic virtue worthy of the reward of Paradise, it is no longer a difficult matter to guess the general features characteristic of those who will be thrown into Hell, 'the Fellows of the Left', as they are sometimes called. (The Fellows of the Left—alas the Fellows of the Left!—in the midst of burning, poisonous winds and boiling waters, under the shadow of a choking smoke, which [though it is a shadow] is neither cool nor beneficent, LVI, 40-43.) Those will surely be put in such a humiliating state, who are not qualified by any of the 'positive' properties, or are even marked by some of the characteristics that are the exact opposites of these good qualities.

It goes without saying that the *kāfir* goes at the head of this grand procession marching towards *Jahannam* (Gehenna).

For those who reveal themselves ungrateful to [*kafarū*] their Lord, there is the torment of Gehenna—an evil end of the journey, indeed! (LXVII, 6)

The *kāfirs* are thrown into the Fire as the just reward for their *fusūq*, that is, for having given themselves over to an exceedingly dissolute life against the commandments of God.

Upon the day [of the Last Judgment] when the *kāfir* are put out to the Fire: 'You squandered your precious things in your worldly



life and found enjoyment in them. So today you shall be recompensed with a humiliating chastisement for that you grew arrogant in the earth without any right, and for that you were ungodly (*tafsugūna* from *fusūq*). (XLVI, 19)

There participate in this procession to Hell all those who are related in some way or other with the *kāfirs*, that is, those who embody and represent any of the many distinguishable aspects of *kufr*. Here I give at random a few quotations in which some of the 'negative' properties are explicitly brought into connection with the chastisement of Hell Fire.

(1) Those who are characterized by *takdhīb* which I have discussed at some length in the last chapter:

'Then you who go astray and cry lies, you shall eat of a tree of Zaqqūm [the Zaqqum being the name of a monstrous tree which is found at the bottom of Hell, whose flowers are said to be heads of demons], and you shall fill your bellies with it and drink thereon the boiling water, drinking like thirsty camels'. This shall be their entertainment on the Day of Judgment. (LVI, 51-56)

Upon the day when the heavenly vault will swing from side to side, and the mountains will be moved from their places, woe that day unto the *mukadhdhib* (participial form from *takdhīb*) who are now bathing joyously in the submerging floods [of vain discourse about God], the day when they shall be hurled into the fire of Gehenna. 'This is the fire that you used to cry lies to (*tukadhdhibūna*). Say, is this a piece of magic? Or have you not eyes to see? Roast well in it. Whether you endure patiently or endure not patiently, it is all the same to you. You are only going to receive your just recompense for what you were doing. (LII, 9-15)

(2) The *qālim* ('wrong-doer', 'evil-doer'), to which passing reference was made in Chap. IV, and of which much more will be said in the later passage. Here it is sufficient to note that the Zaqqūm tree which, as we have just seen, is said to await the arrival of those who cry lies to God, is mentioned in the following quotation as a special entertainment for the *qālim*.

Is that better as an entertainment, or the tree of Zaqqūm? Verily, We have prepared it as a special torment for the *qālims*. Verily, it is a tree that appears from the root of Hell, its spathes being

as the heads of devils. They shall eat thereof and fill their bellies thereof. After that, they shall be brought back unto Hell.

(XXXVII, 60-66)

(3) The *mustakbir* (syn. *mutakabbir*), or one who is too big with pride to accept docilely the teaching of the Koran. On the moral meaning of *istikbār* itself, something was said already (Chap. IV, p. 36 and Chap. VI, p. 63).

Verily, those who are too proud (*yastakbirūna*, from *istikbār*) to worship Me shall enter into Gehenna, utterly mean and abject.

(XL, 62)

So enter the gates of Gehenna, therein to dwell for ever. Evil indeed will be the abode of the *mutakabbir*. (XVI, 31)

Those who cry lies to Our signs, and are too proud to accept them, these shall be the fellows of the Fire, therein to dwell for ever.

(VII, 34)

(4) Similarly the *tāghī*, one who is exceedingly insolent and presumptuous. The word will be analyzed semantically in a later chapter.

Verily, Gehenna lies in ambush, the last resort for *tāghīna* (pl. of *tāghī*), therein to dwell for ages eternal. They shall not taste therein neither coolness nor drink, but only boiling water and pus. A fit recompense, indeed! (LXXVIII, 21-26)

(5) The *fājir* (pl. *fujjār*), one who, forsaking the commands of God or the rules of moral conduct, acts viciously—as opposed to the *bārr* (pl. *abrār*) 'pious' or 'righteous'.

Verily, the *abrār* shall be in bliss, while the *fujjār* shall be in Hell, to roast therein on the Day of Judgment; they shall never be absent therefrom. (LXXXII, 13-16)

(6) The *qāsiṭ*, one who deviates from the right course and acts wrongfully—as opposed to the *muslim*.

Verily, of us some there are who are *muslim*, and some who are *qāsiṭ*. Those who have surrendered [become Muslims], they have taken the right course. But as for the *qāsiṭ*, they have become

fuel for Gehenna. (LXXII, 14-15)

- (7) The *'āṣī*, one who rebels against God and His Apostle.

Whoso rebels against God and His Apostle, for him is prepared the fire of Gehenna to dwell for ever. (LXXII, 24)

- (8) The *munāfiq*, one who, though outwardly a pious believer, is in reality a most stubborn disbeliever, a 'hypocrite'. *Munāfiq* appeared already in our exposition, and about the semantic structure of this important term more will be said later on.

O Prophet! Strive against the *kāfir* and the *munāfiq*. Punish them ruthlessly. Gehenna shall be their final abode—an evil end of the journey, indeed! (LXVI, 9)

- (9) The *mustahzi*, the scoffer, or one who mocks at God's revelations. The act of making a jest of God's revelation springs from *kufr*. It is the most characteristic attitude of all *kāfirs* towards prophetic messages.

That is the reward of such men [i.e. those who disbelieve in the signs of God], Gehenna, because they acted as *kāfirs* and took My signs and My Apostles in mockery (*huzu*) (XVIII, 106)

- (10) The *kharrās*, who is condemned in the strongest terms. The word means one who says by conjecture all kinds of things concerning God's revelations.

Accursed be the *kharrāsūna* (pl.) who remain heedless [of the warnings of God], being submerged in the flood [of ungodliness]. 'When is the Day of Judgment?' they ask. Upon the day when at the Fire they shall be tormented—'Taste well your torment! This is what you wished [in the world] to hasten'. (LI, 10-14)

Finally, I should like to mention those who never believe in God, and in consequence, never participate in the social charity and relief work. Hailstones of abuse are hurled at these people, attesting to the extraordinary importance attached by Muhammad to the Islamic duty of being ready to offer a helping hand at any moment to the poor and needy.

Take hold of him, fetter him, and then in Hell roast him, and then in a chain of seventy cubits put him! Verily, he believed not in the Almighty God, nor did he ever urge the feeding of the

destitute. So today he has not here any good friend. There is no food for him except what oozes out from the skins of his companions, which no one would eat except the sinners. (LXIX, 30-37)

By way of conclusion I shall add a few quotations in which several of the 'negative' properties are put together in a jumble, whether unified in one single person or divided among a number of persons.

Throw into Gehenna, you two [this is said by God to the two 'stokers' of Hell Fire], every stubborn *kaffār* (emphatic form of *kāfir*), who hinders by all means (*mannā*) the good, transgresses (*mu'tadī*), entertains doubts [about God and His revelations], who sets up another god besides God. So throw him, you two, into the dreadful chastisement! (L, 23-25)

Here we find four sins particularly pointed out as being worthy of the reward of terrible torment in Gehenna: (1) *kufr*; (2) the act of hindering others positively from doing such works as are considered religiously good; (3) the transgression against God's will; (4) and throwing doubt on the truth of God and turning to polytheism.

Obey thou [Muhammad] not those who cry lies (*mukadhdhib*); it is their wish that thou shouldst treat them gently, so that they, too, would be gentle to thee. And obey thou not any vile oath-monger (*ḥallāf*), a backbiter (*hammāz*) going about to spread abroad slanders, a hinderer of the good, a sinful transgressor, rough and rude (*utul*) therewithal, ignoble (*zanīm*), though he is possessed of wealth and sons. Whenever Our signs are recited to such a man, he always says, '[these are but] old folks' tales'. We shall brand him on the snout. (LXVIII, 10-16)

In this passage, the features that are mentioned are seven: (1) *takdhīb*, (2) the act of swearing at haphazard, that is, lack of truthfulness, (3) backbiting, which is, as we saw earlier, a special form of *kadhib*, (4) the hindering of the good, (5) transgression—the items (4) and (5) being common to this and the preceding passages—(6) the rudeness of manner, peculiar to the Jahiliyyah, and (7) being of a base, ignoble character such as is characteristic of an 'outsider' in the tribal system of society. (For this last element, *zanīm* 'ignoble', see in particular Chap. VI, p. 49).

The following words are the imaginary confession of those who have been thrown into Gehenna on the Day of Judgment.

'We were not of those who observed the ritual of worship, nor did we feed the poor and needy. But we used to plunge together with other plungers [into the flood of vain discourse concerning God and His revelations], and we cried lies to the Day of Judgment, until at last the indisputable state of affairs has come to us.'

(LXXIV, 44-48)

In this confession four things are made to stand out as most immediately responsible for the sinners' being punished with the torment of Hell: (1) their not having observed the ritual of worship; (2) the non-payment of the poor-rate, or *zakāt*; (3) vain discourse about religious matters; (4) *takdhīb*.

Having obtained some general notions as to the distinguishing marks of those who go to paradise and those who are bound for Hell, we are now in a position to proceed to a detailed analysis of the key value-words belonging to either of the two diametrically opposed categories. This will be the main task of the following chapters.

## Chapter IX

### KUFR, THE GREATEST OF ALL SINS

In proceeding to give in detail an account of the principal moral properties that are found in the Koran, I begin with *kufr*, which is admittedly by far the greatest of all sins, instead of beginning with any of the virtues on the positive side. I adopt this course because it has an obvious methodological advantage for my purpose: *kufr* forms not only the very pivotal point round which revolve all the other negative qualities, but it occupies in fact such an important place in the whole system of Koranic ethics that a clear understanding of how it is semantically structured is almost a necessary prerequisite to a proper estimation of most of the positive qualities as well. Even a cursory reading of the Scripture will convince anyone at once that the role played by the concept of *kufr* is so peculiarly influential that it makes its presence felt well-nigh everywhere in sentences about human conduct or character. In my opinion, even the semantics of the faith or belief, as the highest virtue in Islam, may best be assessed not directly but rather in terms of *kufr*, that is, from its negative side.

Now concerning *kufr*, we know already many things, because reference was frequently made to this or that aspect of its complex meaning as occasion arose. Let us here repeat in the most summary way those points which we have established, and which are scattered through the preceding pages.

(1) The basic meaning of the root *KFR*, as far as our philological knowledge goes, is most probably that of 'covering'. In contexts concerned especially with the bestowing and receiving of benefits, the word naturally comes to mean 'to cover, i.e. ignore knowingly, the benefits which one has received', and thence, 'to be unthankful, to be an ingrate'.

(2) The Koran emphasizes most strongly the Almighty God being particularly a God of grace and goodness. Man, as His creature, owes everything, his very existence and subsistence, to the boundless mercy of this God. This means that he owes Him the duty of being grateful for His goodness which is being shown him at every moment of his life. The *kāfir* is a man who, having thus received God's gifts of benevolence, shows no sign of gratitude in his conduct, or even acts rebelliously against his Benefactor.

(3) This fundamental attitude of ingratitude in regard to God's grace and goodness is manifested in the most radical and positive way by *takdhīb*, that is, 'crying lies' to His Apostle and the divine message he is sent with.

(4) Thus it comes about that *kufr* is actually used very frequently as the exact antonym of *īmān* 'belief'. In the Koran the most representative opposite of *mu'min* 'believer' or *muslim* 'lit. who has surrendered' is admittedly *kāfir*. This fact talks

much in both ways. On the one hand, it would appear that *kufr*, having been used so often in contrast to *imān*, lost more and more of its original semantic core of 'ingratitude', and assumed more and more the meaning of 'dis-belief', until finally it has come to be used most ordinarily in this latter sense even where there can be hardly any question of gratitude. At least this much can be safely asserted, that as a matter of actual fact the Koranic use of the word *kufr* is often more aptly interpretable in terms of 'belief' than in terms of 'thankfulness'. The same fact seems to warrant the conjecture, on the other hand, that, in accordance with the rule of semantic contagion among the neighboring words, the meaning of 'belief' itself must have been very strongly influenced by the original meaning of 'ingratitude' in *kufr*.

(5) *Kufr*, as the denial of the Creator on the part of man, manifests itself most characteristically as various acts of insolence, haughtiness, and presumptuousness. *Istakbara* 'to be big with pride' and *istaghna*[y] 'to consider one's self as absolutely free and independent' have been mentioned above; as we shall presently see, there are still many other words standing for similar ideas. *Kufr* forms, in this respect, the exact opposite of the attitude of 'humbleness' *taqarru*, and clashes directly with the idea of *taqwa*[y] 'fear', which is indeed the central element of the Islamic conception of 'religion' in general.

These are, roughly, the most essential points about *kufr* which we have established in the preceding. Our remaining task will consist chiefly in enlarging on the subject through the process of analyzing semantically some of the relevant passages in which the root *KFR* appears under various forms. Some of the related ideas will be discussed in the following chapter.

### I The element of ingratitude in *kufr*

I gave earlier an excellent example of the 'secular' use of the word *kāfir* (cf. p. 38), bringing out in a really striking way the element of 'ingratitude' as the semantic core of *kufr*. So turning at once to the behavior of the term in specifically religious contexts, I should like to begin by giving an interesting example which is indeed a rarity of the kind. It concerns *kufr* not as an attitude of man towards God, but quite the other way round; more precisely, it presents *kufr* as an attitude which it is absolutely impossible for God to adopt towards man. The passage reveals the remarkable fact that, just as it is a religious duty of man to be grateful to God for His acts of grace, so God, on His part, is bound by virtue of His own goodness to be thankful to man for all the good works that he does as a pious believer in response to the divine call through His Apostle. God will never 'ignore' the good services rendered by a sincere believer, but he acknowledges them gratefully and record them for him. The feeling of gratefulness is here mutual. And the principle of non-*kufr* on the part of God will be manifested most visibly in the bestowal,

on the Day of Judgment, of the reward of Heavenly Gardens.

Whoso does good works as a pious believer, there shall be no ingratitude (*kufr*) for his efforts. Verily, We Ourselves write them down for him. (XXI, 94)

As is evident, this means in plain language that God will never bring any act of piety to naught, but will surely pay it back amply. Reduced to this form, the passage just quoted would lose all its seeming strangeness and become completely of a piece with the general trend of thought in the Koran. What makes this passage particularly interesting and important for our purpose is that it expresses this fundamental thought in terms of *kufr*, and bears thereby witness to the fact that the essence of *kufr* consists in 'ungratefulness' and that the word is applicable in the same sense even to the attitude of God towards the believers.

The examples that follow, on the contrary, all concern man's attitude towards the favors of God. God, with His inscrutable will, goes on bestowing upon man innumerable favors, but man remains stubbornly thankless to Him.

Hast thou not seen those who paid back God's favors with ungratefulness (*kufr*), and induced their people to dwell in the abode of perdition? In Gehenna they shall roast — an evil resting-place indeed! (XIV, 33)

In the two following quotations *kufr* is put expressly in antithesis to *shukr* 'thankfulness'.

Here is a similitude which God has just struck: [there was] a city, secure and in peace, its provision coming to it in abundance from all quarters. But it was ungrateful for God's favors, so God caused it to taste the garment of death and fear for what they were doing..... Eat, then, of what God has provided you with, lawful and good things, and be thankful for God's favors, if it is really Him that you worship. (XVI, 113-115)

[I have bestowed upon you favors.] So remember Me, and I will remember you. Be thankful to Me, and be not ungrateful to Me. (II, 147)

Man's *kufr*-nature becomes especially evident when one observes his conduct in time of distress. In the first two examples that follow the root appears in the form of *kafūr*, which, according to al-Baiḍāwī, suggests an exceeding degree of *kufr* and

denotes the type of man who is extremely forgetful of all benefits he has enjoyed, although he retains in memory the slightest hurt he has received.

Your Lord it is who drives the ships for you in the sea so that you may seek after His bounty. So merciful is He towards you. Moreover, when some affliction befalls you in the sea, those whom you call upon usually [i. e. the idols] forsake you, leaving Him alone. But when He brings you safe to shore, you turn away. Man is indeed an ingrate (*kafūr*). (XVII, 69)

So long as We let man taste of mercy from Us, he is very glad thereof. But the moment some evil befalls him because of that which his own hands have done, he shows himself to be an ingrate (*kafūr*). (XLII, 47)

When they ride in the ships they pray to God, holding out their religion sincerely to Him alone. But as soon as He has brought them safe to shore, behold, they return to polytheism, thus to act ungratefully (*yakfrū*, a verbal form from *kufr*) for what We [the subject here changes abruptly to the first person] have given them [i. e. Our favors], and betake themselves to merry-making.

(XXIX, 65-66; cf. also XXX, 33, XVI, 55-57)

Sometimes God gives a very detailed list of the favors——called 'signs' *āyāt* (pl. of *āyah*)——which He has bestowed upon men (XVI, 3-18) and adds that in spite of such benevolence on His part most of them remain negligent of the duty of being grateful to Him. In the following quotation, he it remarked, man is accused of being 'unfair' or 'wrongful' *ḡalūm*——for the more exact meaning of this word see later——because of his attitude of *kufr* towards God's gifts.

God it is who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down from heaven water, and produced therewith fruits as a provision for you. And He subjected to you the ships to run upon the sea as He commands. And He subjected to you the rivers. And He subjected to you the sun and the moon to run their fixed courses. And He subjected to you the night and the day. Yea, He gave you of all you asked Him. If you count God's favors, you will never number them. Verily, man is too unfair, too ungrateful (*kaffār*, emphatic form of *kāfir*). (XIV, 37)

The following quotation brings out with explicit clarity that God does expect

man to be grateful to Him for all the favors He has given him. He enumerates in every meticulous detail the items of His bounty; states that all these He has bestowed upon man 'that haply he may give thanks'; that man denies, however, the blessing of God, although he recognizes it clearly; and He reaches the conclusion that 'the great majority of men are *kāfir*.'

God brought you forth out of the wombs of your mothers when you knew naught about it, and He made for you hearing, and sight, and hearts, *that haply you will be thankful*.

Have they not seen the birds subjected in mid-air? None holds them there but God. Verily, *this must be a [divine] sign for a people who believe*.

And God it is who established for you as a dwelling-place your houses; and make for you houses out of the skins of cattle, very light to carry both on the day you journey and on the day you abide; and with their wool, fur, and hair, He prepared for you furniture and articles of enjoyment for a while.

And God it is, too, who has made for you, of that which He created, shelter from the sun, and established the mountains as places of refuge, and made for you shirts to keep off extreme heat, and also shirts to protect you from each other's violence. *Thus He fulfils His favors towards you, that haply you may surrender* [i. e. become good Muslims in return for this extraordinary benevolence of God]. But if, with all this, they still turn their backs, thy [i. e. Muhammad's] mission is only to deliver the clear message. *They recognize the favors of God, and yet they deny them, for most men are ungrateful*. (XVI, 80-85)

I shall conclude this section by remarking that we have in the Koran an instance of another forcible word, *kanūd*, used in approximately the same meaning as *kafūr* (see above, p. 115). The root is *KND*, and means 'to be ungrateful, to refuse to acknowledge any benefit received.' The context seems to suggest that the word is here used with an implication that man tends to reveal his ingratitude by being avaricious of wealth and grudging others even a small portion of the good things which he has received from God. I have already pointed out that passing on some at least of the divine gifts to the poor and needy was considered by Muhammad to be part of the manifestation of gratitude one feels towards God for His grace.

Indeed, how ungrateful (*kanūd*) man is to his Lord! Verily, he himself is a witness of that! Indeed, how passionate he is in the love of good things! (C, 6-8)



## II *Kufr* as opposed to *īmān* 'belief'

In this section I am going to give some of the most typical examples of the use of the word in question as an exact antonym of 'belief'. We may remark at the outset that the 'signs' of God, which, in the last section, were chiefly understood as 'favours' conferred by Him upon men, calling forth 'thankfulness', may also very well be interpreted as so many manifestations of divine Majesty, the Al-mightiness of God. In this second aspect, the 'signs' are naturally expected to arouse wonder and awe — the 'fear' — in the minds of men, and to cause them to 'believe' in divine Providence. He who refuses to do so is a *kāfir*.

O people of the Scripture! why do you disbelieve (*takfrūna*, from *kufr*) in the signs of God, when you yourselves bear witness to them? (III, 63)

Indeed We have displayed for men in this Koran all sorts of similitudes [to make them understand the truth of God's words], but most men refuse aught but disbelief (*kufūr*). (XVII, 91)

Have not those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) seen that the heavens and the earth were [originally] stitched together, and We unstitched them asunder, and made out of water all kinds of living things? *Will they not believe for all this?*

And We set on the earth mountains firm-rooted, lest it should totter with them, and We placed therein ravines for paths, *that haply they may be guided* [i.e. they may be rescued from error and perdition and find the way to salvation]. And We established the heaven as a solid roof. *Yet from Our signs they still turn away.* (XXI, 31-34)

How can you disbelieve (*takfurūna*) in God, seeing that you were lifeless and He gave you life? He will give you death again, then He will give you life, then unto Him you shall all be brought back. (II, 26)

Sometimes the object of disbelief is the doctrine of Resurrection, which is, as we saw earlier, one of the central tenets of Islam. Here *kufr* consists in the refusal to accept the doctrine as being completely absurd and fantastic. It has very little, if at all, to do with the emotional reaction of 'thankfulness'; the issue hinges around the acceptability or non-acceptability of such a doctrine to human reason. The *kāfirs* are those who definitely take the side of Reason in this issue and turn a deaf ear to Revelation.

They assert, 'there is naught but our present life. We shall never be raised.' If only thou couldst see them when they are set before their Lord [on the Day of Judgment]! He will ask, 'Is not this the truth?' And they will answer, 'Yea, by our Lord!' He will say, 'Then taste the chastisement for that you disbelieved [i.e. as the reward for your disbelief in the resurrection]'. (VI, 29-30)

'What! when we are bones and rubbish, shall we really be raised up in a new creation?' — Have they not seen that God, who created the heavens and the earth, is able to create [again] the like of them? He has set for them a definite term, wherein there is no doubt. And yet the wrongful people refuse aught but disbelief (*kufūr*). (XVII, 100-101)

If thou shouldst wonder, wondrous indeed is what they are saying: 'What! after we have become dust? Shall we then be created afresh?' These are they who disbelieve in their Lord. And these are they who shall be the fellows of the Fire, therein to dwell for ever. (XIII, 5)

Their disbelief is not in any way confined to the doctrine of resurrection. Being constantly pricked with the thorn of Reason, they keep doubting anything that contradicts what they believe to be reasonable. They are born sceptics; the attitude which characterizes them is just the opposite of the act of faith as unconditioned surrender to whatever God commands. Thus they cannot acknowledge as the Apostle of God a simple mortal, one among themselves, who 'eats ordinary food and walks in the market-place'. To their sceptical minds it sounds strangely discordant with all reason that such an ordinary man who appears to possess no special claim to prestige should attribute to himself the prophetic authority: 'Are we to follow a single mortal from among ourselves? Then verily, we should be in error and folly. Is it possible that the revelation should be cast upon him alone out of all of us? Nay, rather he is an impostor (*kadhdhāb*), a self-conceited fellow!' (LIV, 24-25). A storm of indignation is raised when this 'impudent fellow' proclaims that there is only one God, all the other deities being mere names, a doctrine which is indeed nothing but sheer absurdity for the idol-worshippers.

They are astonished that a warner has come to them from among themselves. The disbelievers (*kāfirūna*) say, 'This is only a wizard, an impostor. What! has he made all the gods One God? That is indeed an astounding thing!' (XXXVIII, 3-4)

It is one of the most characteristic brands of the sceptically minded to be always putting embarrassing questions to the Prophet concerning his mission and wrangling among themselves about the divine Truth.

Would you go on questioning your Apostle just as Moses was questioned aforetime? But whoso chooses disbelief (*kufṛ*) instead of belief (*īmān*) has surely gone astray from the right way. (II, 102)

Vain arguing or wrangling about God and His revelations is frequently mentioned in the Koran as a typical manifestation of *kufṛ*. The root *JDL*, whose primary meaning is that of 'twisting (things like ropes) tight and firm', presents the fit image for this kind of vehement altercation.

None wrangle (*yujādilu*) concerning the signs of God save those who disbelieve (*kafarū*). So let not their bustling in the land deceive thee. The people of Noah before them also used to cry lies, and all the parties thereafter. Every nation wished to seize their Apostle, and wrangled (*jādalū*) with vain discourse, that they might refute thereby the Truth. (XL, 4-5)

We send not the Apostles save as bearers of good tidings and as warners. But those who disbelieve wrangle with vain discourse, that they might refute thereby the Truth. They take My signs and the warnings given them in mockery. (XVIII, 54)

Amongst men there is one who wrangles (*yujādilu*) concerning God without knowledge, without guidance, and without an illuminating Scripture, turning away to seduce [others] out of the way of God. For such a man is ignominy in the present world, and on the Day of Resurrection, We shall make him taste the chastisement of burning. (XXII, 8; cf. also XXXI, 19)

Although there is no explicit reference to *kufṛ* in this quotation, the contextual situation makes it beyond any doubt clear that 'he who wrangles' is no other than a typical *kāfir*. The same is true of the following examples, the first of which is of particular interest semantically in that it sees this sort of altercation in its relation to the haughtiness and arrogance of the mind. That haughtiness is an unmistakable mark of *kufṛ* has often been pointed out in the course of this book, and it will be discussed more fully in a later passage.

Those who wrangle (*yujādilūna*) concerning the signs of God,

without any warrant given them — this is greatly hateful in the sight of God and those who believe. Thus does God set a seal on every haughty, arrogant heart. (XL, 37)

When the son of Mary [Jesus] is mentioned as an example, lo! thy folk turn away from it and say, 'Are our gods better, or is he?' They mention him not to thee, save for wrangling (*jadāl*). Nay, but they are an extremely contentious people [the word here rendered as 'extremely contentious' is *khaṣim* from *KH-ṢM* meaning one who is particularly fond of wrangling, and tends to be very vehement in dispute.] (XLII, 57-58)

Let those who wrangle concerning Our signs know that they have no refuge [from the wrath of God]. (XLII, 33)

From innumerable cases of this sort God Himself draws the conclusion that man is the most contentious of all creatures.

We have verily displayed for men in this Koran all manner of similitudes, and yet [most of them stubbornly refuse to believe]; man is indeed the most contentious of all things. (XVIII, 52)

Here follow some examples, out of a great number, of the use of *KFR*, which will serve particularly to bring to light the basic semantic antithesis between *kufṛ* and *īmān*, that is, in other words, *kufṛ* as opposed, not to the concept of 'thankfulness', but to that of 'belief'.

Many of the people of the Scripture would fain turn you back into disbelievers (*kuffār*, pl. of *kāfir*) after your profession of belief (*īmān*), through the envious nature of their souls, after the Truth has become manifest unto them. (II, 103)

How shall God guide a folk who become disbelievers (*kafarū*) after they became once believers and testified to the truth of the Apostle, and the clear signs came to them? ..... Verily, those who disbelieve after their profession of belief, and go on increasing in disbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted. (III, 80, 84)

Those who disbelieve say, 'We will never believe in this Koran, nor in the [Scriptures] before it'. If only thou couldst see these wrong-doers set before their Lord, trying to attribute these words

the one to the other!

(XXXIV, 30)

When there comes to them [i.e. the people of Israel] what they know [to be the Truth] *they disbelieve* in it. The curse of God be on *the disbelievers*. What a bad bargain they have sold their souls for, that *they should disbelieve* in that which God has sent down, mortally offended because God bestows of His bounty upon whomsoever of His servants He will. Thus they have brought on themselves [divine] wrath upon wrath. For the *disbelievers* there shall be a shameful chastisement. And when it is said to them, '*Believe* in that which God has sent down', they reply, '*We believe* only in that which was revealed unto us [referring to the Bible], and *they disbelieve* in what comes after it, though it is the Truth that confirms what they possess [i.e. the Book of Revelation which they possess already].

(II, 83-85)

Verily, the worst of beasts in the sight of God are those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) and will not believe (*yu'minūna*, a verb form corresponding to *īmān*): those who, every time thou makest a covenant with them, break their covenant because they fear not God. [For the concepts of 'covenant' and 'fear' and their relation to 'belief', see above, Chap. VII].

(VIII, 57)

### III The heart (*qalb*) of a *kāfir*

The Koran devotes a considerable number of verses to the description of the state of a *kāfir* mind. The following are the chief features that stand out in these verses as particularly characteristic of the constitution of such a mind. Let us begin by noting that the hearts of those who believe are described as finding a calm, sweet rest in remembrance of God: 'Those who believe, their hearts rest calmly in God's remembrance. Aye, in God's remembrance do their hearts rest calm and serene.' (XIII, 28). In contrast to this calm, peaceful state of the believing heart, the hearts of the *kāfirs* are very often described as being 'hardened like stones.' *Qasat qulūbu-hum* 'their hearts are hard, or, have become hardened' is a standing metaphor for the state of the *kāfir* hearts which would stubbornly resist to the call of the divine voice 'even though the mountains were moved, or the earth cleft' (XIII, 30) and 'even though We had sent down the angels to them, and the dead had spoken to them' (VI, III).

Even after that [i.e. after God had shown them many astounding miracles] your hearts were hard as rocks, or even harder still. For,

in fact, rocks there are from which rivers gush forth, and others which split in two to let water flow out. Indeed there are even rocks that crash down for the fear of God. (II, 69)

Because they [i.e. the Jews as *kāfirs*] broke their covenant [with Us], We cursed them and made their hearts hard (*qāsiyah*).

(V, 16)

We may note in passing that in the last-quoted sentence, the hardening of the *kāfirs*' hearts is attributed to God's will to pay the *kāfirs* their account. The point is bound up with the well-known doctrine of divine foreordination and the moral freedom of men, and it did lead to very serious debate in Islamic theology as to whether all evil including *kuf*r might justifiably be attributed to God's will. As far as the Koranic texts are concerned, however, this question is left undecided, for clearly they are double-faced on this delicate point. And it would be far beside the scope of the present inquiry to try to find some way of resolving this apparent theoretical paradox.

The second characteristic of the *kāfir* heart is that it is 'veiled'. (*fī akinnah*), that there is a veil or partition curtain (*hijāb*) between it and God's revelations.

[This is] an Arabic Koran for a people who have understanding, a bearer of good tidings and warning. Most of them, however, have turned away and will not give ear. They say, 'Our hearts are veiled from what thou callest us to, in our ears is deafness, and between us and thee there is a partition' (XLI, 2-4)

When thou recitest the Koran, We place between thee and those who believe not in the Hereafter a partition curtain (*hijāb*), and We place veils (*akinnah*) upon their hearts lest they understand it, and in their ears deafness. (XVII, 47-48)

The same thought is expressed in various ways. It may, for instance, be expressed by means of the metaphor of a 'seal' upon the heart.

As for those who are *kāfirs*, whether thou warn them or warn them not it would be all the same to them, they believe not. God has sealed (*khatama*) their hearts and their hearing, and on their eyes there is a covering (*ghishāwah*). (II, 5-6)

They [i.e. those who, on some specious excuse, do not go forth to

fight 'in the way of God'] are pleased to be with those who tarry behind. God has sealed (*ṭaba'a*) their hearts, so that they can understand nothing. (IX, 94; cf. IX, 88)

Or it may be expressed by saying that there are 'locks' on their hearts:

Will they not meditate upon the Koran, or is it that there are locks (*aqfāl*) upon their hearts? (XLVII, 26)

Or by means of a still more forcible imagery of circumcision:

They say, 'Our hearts are uncircumcised (*ghulf*)'. Nay, but God has cursed them for their disbelief (*kufṛ*), and little it is that they believe. (II, 82)

Or, finally, by the image of rust covering little by little the heart:

Nay but what they used to do has rusted (*rāna*, from *RYN* 'to cover with rust') upon their hearts. (LXXXIII, 13-14)

'Those who have a heart' (L, 36) must easily grasp the deep meaning of the signs sent down by God; upon them the revealed words of God should work as a real reminder (*dhikrā* [y]). But, being veiled and obstructed in the way just described, the hearts of the kāfirs cannot perceive the religious significance of anything. They remain blind and deaf to divine signs. The imagery of blindness and deafness is among the most commonly used in the Koran for describing the distinguishing features of the kāfirs.

We made for them hearing, and eyesight, and hearts, but their hearing, and their hearts availed them naught, seeing that they always denied the signs of God and they are now surrounded on all sides by what they used to mock at. (XLVI, 25)

This means that, physically, the kāfirs are defectless: they have hearts to understand with, ears to hear, and eyes to see with; it is their hearts 'that are within the bosoms' that are defective. The next quotation brings out this point in explicit terms:

Have they not travelled in the land [the earth is full of divine signs] so that they have hearts wherewith to understand or ears wherewith to hear? Nay, it is not the eyes that are blind, but it

is rather the hearts within the bosoms that are blind. (XXII, 42)

O believers, obey God and His Apostle ..... and be not like those who say, 'We hear', while in fact they hear not.

Verily, the worst of beasts in the sight of God are those who are deaf and dumb and do not understand. Had God recognized any good in them, He would have made them hear. But had He made them hear, they would have turned back and gone aside.

(VIII, 22-24)

So all efforts done for inducing them to believe are sure to end in a mere waste of labor. We often see God remonstrating with Muhammad on the vainness of extending his apostolic enthusiasm towards these people, for it is almost absolutely certain that it is impossible for them to be converted.

Deemest thou that most of them hear or understand? They are but as the cattle. Nay, but they are farther astray. (XXV, 46)

Verily, thou canst not make the dead to hear, nor canst thou make the deaf to hear the call when they turn their backs to thee. Neither canst thou guide the blind out of their straying. Thou canst make none to hear save those who believe in Our signs and surrender [unto Us]. (XXVII, 82-83; XXX, 51-52)

Of them there are some who give ear to thee. But canst thou make the deaf to hear when they understand naught? And of them there are some who look towards thee. But canst thou guide the blind when they see naught? (X, 43-44)

Having a veiled heart, a kāfir cannot apprehend the signs of God as they are, even though he gives ear to the recitation of Koran and looks towards the Apostle. To him, divine signs are just the fairy-tales of old folks:

Of them there are some who give ear to thee, but as We have placed a veil upon their hearts, they apprehend it [i.e. the deep meaning of God's words] not. And in their ears [We have put] deafness. And even if they see any sign, they do not believe in it, so that when they come to thee they start an argument with thee, these kāfirs, saying 'This is naught but old folks' tales.' (VI, 25)

Thus he who attempts to convert the kāfirs is likened to a drover shouting to his

cattle. The cattle only hear his voice; they never apprehend what his words mean.

The likeness of [one who calls to the faith] those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) is as the likeness of him who shouts to that which can hear naught else but a shouting voice. Deaf, dumb, and blind, they apprehend naught. (II, 166)

#### IV *Kufr* as polytheism

Since *kufr* in both of its main aspects 'thanklessness' and 'disbelief', cannot but end in denying the absolute Oneness of God, there is naturally a respect in which it can fairly be equated with polytheism. Polytheism in ancient Arabia consisted in the worship of idols, and a number of minor deities that were called sometimes the sons and daughters of God, or more simply 'companions' or 'associates' of God. The most usual term for this kind of polytheism is *shirk*; and for the idolater *mushrik*, literally, 'one who associates', that is, one who ascribes partners to God. Thus we obtain two formulas of semantic equivalence in this province: *kufr*=*shirk* and *kāfir*=*mushrik*.

First I shall quote some passages where *kufr* is talked of expressly in terms of 'associating'.

Praise be to God who created the heavens and the earth, and put in order the darkness and the light. Yet those who are *kāfirs* ascribe equals unto their Lord. (VI, 1)

They ascribe unto God associates (*shurakā*). Say, 'Name them. Is it that you would tell Him what He knows not in the earth? Or are they but empty names? Nay, but their contrivance appears fair to those who are *kāfirs*, and thus they are kept away from [God's] way. (XII, 33)

Whenever God alone was invoked, you disbelieved (*kafartum*), but if others were associated [with Him], you believed. (XL, 12)

The essential traits of *shirk* are perhaps best brought out in the following passage:

Yet they appoint the jinn as the associates [of God], though in reality they are but His creatures, and ascribe unto Him sons and daughters without any knowledge. Glorified be He, and high be He exalted above what they attribute [unto Him]! (VI, 100)

In the next quotation, the semantic content of the word *mushrik* is chiefly determined by two factors: (1) *not* following divine revelations, and (2) *not* acknowledging the absolute Oneness of God.

Follow thou that which is revealed to thee from thy Lord. There is no God but He. So turn away from the *mushrik*. (VI, 106)

It will be worth noting that from the standpoint of the thoroughgoing monotheism of Muhammad, even the Christian doctrine of Trinity constitutes glaring idolatry. And so also the deification of Jesus Christ. In the following, be it remarked, these central tenets of Christianity are treated invariably as acts of *kāfirs*. Semantically, this should be understood in this way: these belong to the category of *kufr* by being cases of *shirk*. This point comes out explicitly in the text.

They surely are *kāfirs* who say, 'God is the Messiah, son of Mary.' For the Messiah [himself] said, 'O children of Israel, worship God, My Lord and your Lord. Verily, whosoever ascribes unto God associates, God shall surely declare Paradise forbidden unto him, and the Fire shall be his ultimate abode. The wrong-doers shall have none to help them'.

They surely are *kāfirs* who say, 'God is the third of Three'. Nay, there is no god save One God. If they desist not from saying so, there shall befall those of them that commit such an act of *kufr* a painful chastisement. (V, 76-77)

Seen from still another angle, *shirk* is neither more nor less than forgery, the 'forging against God a lie' *iftirā* 'alā[*y*] *Allah al-kadhib* which we have discussed in connection with the moral value of 'truthfulness' *ṣidq* in Chap. VII. For, obviously, idolatry or polytheism consists in creating 'out of caprice' beings that are in reality mere nothing. And via this route, too, *shirk* connects ultimately with *kufr*, as the following passage shows clearly.

They say, 'God has taken to Himself a son.' Glorified be He! He is the Self-sufficient. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. You have no authority for this. Will you say about God what you do not know? Tell them, 'Verily, those who forge against God a lie shall never end well.' ..... We shall make them taste the harsh chastisement for that they were *kāfirs*. (X, 69)

The *kāfir* in this sense — i.e. *kāfir*=*mushrik* — is compared to a man who stretches forth his hands in vain towards the mirage of water in the desert.



To Him alone is the prayer of truth, whilst those unto whom they pray apart from God answer them naught. It may be compared to a man who stretches forth his hands to water that it may come unto his mouth, and it reaches it not. The prayer of the kāfirs is sure to go astray. (XIII, 15)

As for those who are kāfirs, their deeds are like a mirage in the desert; the thirsty man takes it for water, till when he comes unto it he finds it naught, but he finds God instead, and He pays him his account. For swift indeed is God at reckoning. (XXIV, 39)

There follows this last-quoted passage another comparison which pictures a *kāfir-mushrik* as a man covered by thick layers of darkness on a vast, abysmal sea.

Or like darkness upon an abysmal sea, covered by a wave above which is a wave, overspread with clouds, darkness upon darkness. When he stretches forth his hand, scarce can he see it. To whomsoever God has given no light, for him there can be no light. (XXIV, 40)

Here is another simile used for emphasizing the essential vanity of the deeds of the *mushrik*:

Whoso associates (*yushrik*, verbal form corresponding to the participial-adjectival *mushrik*) with God [partners], it is as though he has fallen from the sky and the birds snatch him away, or the wind blows him away to a far-off place. (XXII, 32)

Concerning *kufr-shirk* there remains one more important point to be noticed. It is this: the Koran attributes *shirk* ultimately to the working of the mental faculty of *ẓann* 'thinking', a word which is used as a general rule in contrast to 'ilm 'knowledge (as established unshakably on the basis of reality)', and denotes accordingly a groundless, unwarranted type of thinking, uncertain or doubtful knowledge, unreliable opinion, or mere conjecture. Thus it has come about that in the Koranic contexts this term always bears the implication of being a negative value, just as 'ilm, its contrary, has acquired the status of a positive value. Both *ẓann* and 'ilm are value-words in the Koran.

Dost thou not see that to God belongs whosoever in the heavens and whosoever in the earth? What, then, do those follow who call upon associates (*shurakā*) besides God? They follow naught but

*ẓann*, verily they are merely conjecturing (*yakhruṣūna*) (X, 67)

This last word, *yakhruṣūna*, is derived from the root *KH-RṢ* having also the meaning of 'doing or saying something by uncertain — and mostly false — opinion', and is opposed to 'ilm. In Surah LI, we have an example of the use of this root under the emphatic form: *kharrāṣ*, one who indulges in conjecturing. It is significant that the commentator al-Baiḍāwī explains this word in this passage by *kadhdhāb* 'a big liar', showing how easily the concept of 'conjecturing' could shade into that of 'talking a lie' in the semantic consciousness of the old Arabs.

Accursed be the *kharrāṣūna* (pl.), who are heedless in the abyss [of *kufr*]! They ask, 'When is the Day of Judgment?' (LI, 10-12)

Here follow two examples of the typical use of the term *ẓann* in the Koran:

Verily, those who believe not in the Hereafter name the angels with female names. But in reality they have no knowledge ('ilm) thereof; they only follow *ẓann*. *Ẓann*, however, can never replace the truth. (LIII, 28-29, also X, 37)

A few verses earlier in the same passage, we find the three ancient goddesses of Mecca, Allāt, al-'Uzzā, and Manāt, declared to be empty names and mere products of groundless conjecture.

Have you considered Allāt and al-'Uzzā, and in the third place Manāt? What will you attribute to Him females [referring to the fact that these goddesses were known as 'Daughters of Allāh'] while you [desire only] male offspring? That were indeed an unfair division. Nay, these are but names which you have named, you and your fathers. God has sent down no warrant for them. They [here the subject changes abruptly] do but follow *ẓann* according to the dictates of their souls' desire. (LIII, 19-23)

## V The attitude of mockery

The Koran describes repeatedly the kāfirs sneering at God and all that He sends down. The attitude of mockery is pointed out as characteristic of them. We have already seen (cf. Chap. V) that the people of the Jahiliyyah, particularly as they were mirrored in the mind of Muhammad, were characterized by jovial levity and foolish carelessness. We know also already that this carelessness originated in their worldly mindedness. For those who saw nothing beyond the present earthly life,

a religion preaching the eternal future life could in any way be no more than a laughing-stock. The most usual expressions for the mocking attitude of this sort in the Koran are *ittakhadha huzu'an* ('to take for mockery') and *istahzā[y]* ('to mock at'), both deriving from the root *HZ'*. The quotations that follow are, semantically, of special importance in that they bring out, each in its own way, the closest relationship that exists between *shirk-kufr* and *istahzā[y]*.

Proclaim loudly whatever thou art commanded, and pay no attention to the *mushrik*. Verily, We are enough to defend thee from the mockers (*mustahzi'ina*, participial form of *istahzā[y]*), from those who set up with God other gods. (XV, 94-96)

Whenever those who are kāfirs behold thee, they make a mockery of thee, [saying,] 'Is this the fellow who talks [disparagingly] of your gods?' Thus they reveal themselves as kāfirs at the mention of the Merciful God. (XXI, 37)

Such is their recompense: Gehenna, because they acted [in the world] as kāfirs, making a mockery of My signs and My Apostles. (XVIII, 106)

*Sakhira*, or *istaskhara* (root *S-KH-R*) is another word meaning exactly the same thing as *istahzā[y]*, and is used in the Koran in exactly the same kind of contexts. Just as the connotation of *istahzā[y]* may be 'transposed' analytically by a periphrasis consisting of a verb and a noun: *ittakhadha huzu'an*, so in the same way *sakhira* or *istaskhara* may be analytically replaced by *ittakhadha sikhriyyan*, the latter half of this phrase being a noun derived from the same root *S-KH-R*. The synonymic relationship between *istahzā[y]* and *sakhira* is best recognizable in the first of the following quotations.

Apostles have been mocked at (*ustuhzi'a*, passive construction) before thee [Muhammad], those that mocked at (*sakhira min*) them [i.e. the Apostles] ended by being surrounded on all sides by that which they used to mock at (*yastahzi'ūna*). (VI, 10; XXI, 42)

Thou [Muhammad] art filled with wonder [at God's potence], but they [do nothing but] mock (*yastaskhirūna*, from *istaskhara*, *S-KH-R*). When they are reminded, they remember not, and when they see a sign, they mock at it (*yastaskhirūna*), and say, 'This is obviously naught but sorcery.' (XXXVII, 12-15)

Verily [this is said by God to the kāfirs on the Day of Judgment], there was a party of My servants who said, 'Our Lord, we do believe, so forgive us and have mercy upon us, for Thou art the most merciful of all'. You, however, took them for mockery (*ittakhadhtumūhum sikhriyyan*), and in laughing at them you were led to forget My remembrance. (XXIII, 111-112)

## VI The attitude of haughtiness

It would be too evident to require any special mention that 'haughtiness' is the twin brother of 'mockery'; for the mocking attitude that has formed the subject of our discussion in the preceding section can be nothing other than a most natural manifestation of the inborn arrogance of the mind. It is important to remark, however, that in the Koranic texts haughtiness means something more than that. Of course, haughtiness or arrogance, in the last analysis, is but one of the various features of *kufr*, but the Koranic outlook lays special emphasis on this element so as to make it represent in many cases the most typical characteristic of the kāfir. Even a cursory examination of the Scripture will convince anyone that Muhammad did look upon the phenomenon of *kufr* mainly through this aspect. To his eye, the insolent boaster walked around as the central figure in the province of negative properties.

It may be worth recalling in this connection that the nomadic virtue of *muruwah* (cf. Chap. IV, VIII), as its very name indicates, was based on an exceedingly high opinion of human power. It was considered most natural that he who was conscious of the inherence of power in his soul should manifest it in all his behavior, that he should act with pride and haughtiness. Even idolatry that was the only authentic religion in the Jahiliyyah was kept within narrow bounds so that it could not hurt the due pride of such persons. From the standpoint of Islam, however, such an attitude of man was nothing less than a titanic rebellion against the supreme authority of God. I have already pointed out that even in the daily relations of life, Islam stresses the importance of keeping to the virtue of *hilm*. And in effect, there is in the Koran constant denunciation of those who 'walk about haughtily in the earth', puffed up with unreasonable pride, bellowing in the most disagreeable voice, and oppressing the poor and weak in their blind contumely.

Distort not thy cheek, turning proudly away from men, nor swagger about in the earth. For God loves not any man haughty and boastful. But be modest in thy gait, and lower thy voice. Verily, the most detestable of all voices is the voice of the ass.

(XXXI, 17)

In the following passage, the vice of niggardliness (see above, Chap. VII, I) is particularly brought into connection with this attitude of arrogance and boastfulness. The words used are exactly the same: 'haughty and boastful' *mukhtāl* (from *KH-YL*) and *fakhūr* (from *F-KH-R*):

.....that you may not exult at what has been given you [i.e. wealth and prestige], for God loves not any man haughty and boastful, such as are niggardly (*yabkhalūna*) and enjoin upon others niggardliness (*bukhl*). (LVII, 23-24)

Such an attitude, which, even in the domain of man-to-man relationships, is sure to incur God's displeasure, attains the highest degree of sinfulness when taken towards God and His Apostle and revelations. Here are some of the passages which describe in vividly concrete terms the reactions of this type produced by God's 'signs' in the *kāfir*s.

May he be accursed — How he estimated [Our signs]! Again, may he be accursed — how he estimated! He cast a look, then he frowned and grimaced; then he stepped back and grew big with pride (*istakbara*), and said, 'Ha, this is naught but magic transmitted. This is naught but man-made speech!' (LXXIV, 19-25)

It will be noticed that most usual term for this kind of arrogance is *istakbara* which, as we saw in an earlier chapter, is a derivation from the root *KBR* with the basic meaning of bigness, and means literally 'to become big, puffed up, with pride'.

Verily, when it is said to them, 'There is no god but God', they become big with pride (*yastakbirūna*) and say, 'What, shall we abandon our gods to follow a poet possessed?' (XXXVII, 34-35)

Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron with Our signs and a manifest authority unto Pharaoh and his ministers. But they grew big with pride (*istakbarū*) — for they were a haughty ('*ālī*') people — and said, 'What, shall we believe two mortals like ourselves, when their people are but our servants?' (XXIII, 47-48)

Here, be it remarked, the Koranic text uses two different words, *istakbara* and '*ālī*', so as to express the two different aspects of the same state of affairs. The first, which is a verb, denotes the arrogance as it were as a dynamic phenomenon of the moment, that is, as a sudden outbreak of the violent emotion of scornful

anger, while the second term, which is an adjective meaning 'high', refers obviously to the inborn quality of haughtiness which is always there, at the bottom of the *kāfir* mind, ready to break out at any moment at the slightest instigation. The next example will make this point still clearer.

When thy Lord said to the angels, 'Lo, I am about to create a mortal out of clay. When I have shaped him, and breathed into him of My spirit, fall you down before him in adoration'. So the angels fell in adoration all together, except Iblis [i.e. Satan] who became big with pride and proved to be a *kāfir*. He [God] said, 'Hast thou become proud (*istakbarta*) [that is, on the spur of the moment] or art thou [naturally] a haughty one ('*ālī*')?' (XXXVIII, 71-76, cf. also XLIV, 30)

Sometimes the word '*ālī*' appears [in the nominal form '*uluww*', the meaning expressed being exactly the same:

When Our signs came to them, plain to see, they said, 'This is mere sorcery.' Thus they denied them, though acknowledging them at bottom, wrongfully and through arrogance ('*uluwwan*'). (XXVII, 13-14, cf. XXVIII, 83)

There is one more closely related word *takabbara*, another verbal form derived from the root *KBR*, which is also very often used in the same sort of contexts. As far as we can judge from its actual usage in the Koran, this word, particularly in its participial form *mutakabbir*, seems to form an intermediate stage between *istakbara* and '*ālī*', inclining rather towards the latter. Otherwise expressed *mutakabbir* appears to be used to denote arrogance as a permanent attribute of the *kāfir* rather than to describe the momentary outburst of the emotion. It will be worthy of notice that al-Baiḍāwī, commenting on the passage in question explains '*ālī*' by *mutakabbir*.

I will turn away from My signs those who are puffed up with pride (*yatakabbarūna*, from *takabbara*) in the earth with no right. If they see any sign they believe not therein; and if they see the path of rectitude they take it not for [their] path; but if they see the path of error they take it for [their] path. All this is because they cry lies to Our signs and are ever heedless of them.

(VII, 143-144)

The next one is particularly important because it brings to light the fundamen-

tal relationship that joins *shirk*, *kuf*, and *takabbur* into a semantic nexus.

Chains shall be put on their necks, and fetters, and they shall be dragged into the boiling water, then in the Fire they shall roast. Then it is said to them, 'Where are all those [gods] that you used to associate (*tushrikūna*, see above, p. 126), besides God? They shall say, 'They have disappeared. Nay, but [it is clear now that] it was 'nothing' that we used to pray to.' Thus does God lead astray the *kāfirs*. 'All this is because you exulted (*tafraḥūna*) in the earth without right, and were self-complacent (*tamraḥūna*). Enter the gates of Gehenna, therein to dwell forever.' Evil indeed is the last abode of the arrogant (*mutakabbir*) ones. (XL, 73-75)

In a similar way, the next quotation discloses the relation of semantic equivalence that exists between the forging of lies (*iftirā' al-kadhib*) against God and the attitude of *takabbur*, so: the forgery of impious lies=arrogance. And to this, further, is opposed very significantly the fear (*taqwā[y]*) of God.

On the Day of Resurrection thou shalt see those who lied (*kadhabū*) against God, with their faces all blackened. Is there not in Gehenna a final abode for the arrogant (*mutakabbir*) ones? But God shall rescue those who feared (*ittaqau*) into a safe refuge, where evil shall not befall them, nor shall they be grieved.

(XXXIX, 61-62)

The same thought may be expressed by an analytical periphrasis containing the semanteme of *KBR* in a purely non-temporal form: *kibr*. Here is an instance of it, which, by the way, interpretes the above-discussed 'wrangling' (*JDL*) about God in terms of 'arrogance' in the heart:

Those who wrangle (*yujādilūna*) concerning the signs of God without any authority given them, verily, there is in their breasts naught but arrogance (*kibr*). (XL, 58)

I turn now to a recapitulatory description of the main features of haughtiness, which I shall classify under a few heads.

(1) *Istakbara* (or *takabbara*) 'to be puffed up with pride'  $\longleftrightarrow$  *āmana* 'to believe'; that is to say, haughtiness as directly opposed to belief and faith.

Moses said, 'I seek refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every

man puffed up with pride (*mutakabbir*) who believes not in the Day of Reckoning.' (XL, 28)

As for those who believe and do good deeds, He will not only pay them in full their wages, but give them more than they merit, out of His bounty. But as for those who show only disdain and scorn (*istankafū*, from *NKF* meaning 'to refuse to do something from disdain') and behave haughtily (*istakbarū*), He will punish them with a painful chastisement. (IV, 172)

Here haughty attitude (*istakbara=istankafa*) stands in opposition to the faith and the pious works springing from it. As to the relation between 'faith' and 'good deeds', I have to refer the reader to a later chapter.

They [Pharaoh and his ministers] said [to Moses], 'Whatever sign thou dost bring unto us to bewitch us therewith, we shall never believe in thee.' So We sent upon them the flood, the locusts, the lice, the frogs, and the blood, all manifest signs, but [every time] they only behaved arrogantly (*istakbarū*), for they were [naturally] a sinful people. (VII, 129-130)

Here, we may remark, the attitude of arrogance is further qualified as being 'sinful' or 'guilty' (*mujrim*). This last word will be analyzed later on.

He [Noah] said, 'My Lord! I have called my people [to belief] night and day, but all my calling has but added to their aversion. Lo, whenever I called them so that Thou mightest forgive them, they put their fingers into their ears, wrapped themselves in their clothes, persisted [in their disbelief], and behaved arrogantly, and ever more arrogantly [*istakbarū (i)stikbāran*]' (LXXI, 5-6)

(2) Non-*istikbār*=belief. This is only the reverse side of the case mentioned under (1), and calls for no comment. Semantically, however, it is important enough to deserve a separate treatment, for the Koran very often looks at the phenomenon of belief precisely from this negative side.

Verily, those who are on the side of thy Lord will never get too proud (*yastakbirūna*) to worship Him, but they do chant His praise, and adore Him. (VII, 205; also XXI, 19)

Have they not regarded whatever thing God has created, its shadow

being cast to the right and the left in adoration before God in all humbleness. Before God does everything fall down in adoration, everything in the heavens and in the earth, whether beasts or the angels; they never grow big with pride (*yastakbirūna*). They fear their Lord above them, and they do what they are commanded.

(XVI, 51-52; see also XXXII, 15)

It will be not without interest to remark that in a passage Christians, the priests and monks in particular, are described as being 'not arrogant' in striking contrast to the Jews and the idolaters who 'are most vehement in hostility to those who believe.' This represents Muhammad's view on Christianity at a certain stage of his prophetic career. His view of the 'people of the Scripture' has its own peculiar history of development, the details of which, however, lay far beside the scope of the present investigation. Suffice it here to quote the passage as an interesting case of the application of the expression *lā yastakbirūna* ('they do not get proud') to those outside the Islamic community.

Thou wilt find that the most vehement of men in hostility to those who believe are the Jews and the idolaters. And thou wilt find that the nearest of all in love to those who believe are those who say, 'Verily, we are Christians'. That is because there are amongst them priests and monks, and they do not grow big with pride.

(V, 85)

(3) *Istakbara*=*kūfr*. The fact itself of this equivalence will need no word of explanation. Here I give only two quotations which I think are best fitted for bringing out the semantic relationship between these two terms.

Then said the chiefs of his [i.e. ṣāliḥ, the Apostle's] people [i.e. the people of Thamūd], who grew arrogant (*istakbarū*), unto those that were despised [i.e. the menials of the people, cf. above, p. 136 ff.], 'Do you know for certain that Salih is one sent from his Lord? They said, 'In that which [i.e. the divine message] he has been sent with, verily, we do believe.' Those who grew arrogant (*istakbarū*) said, 'We, on our part, in that which you believe do disbelieve (*kāfirūna*)

(VII, 73-74)

Yea, My signs did come to thee [this is said to an infidel in the Hell Fire], but thou didst cry them lies, and wert arrogant (*istakbartā*). Thou hast become of those who disbelieved (*kāfirīna*).

(XXXIX, 60)

This last example, besides showing the close relationship between 'disbelief' and 'arrogance', introduces one more element into this combination: *takdhīb* 'crying lies to God's signs', to which reference was frequently made in the preceding.

(4) *istakbara*=*takdhīb*. It will have been gathered from what I have often pointed out that the Koranic outlook considers arrogance or haughtiness as the most characteristic inner attitude of the *kāfir*, corresponding to, or rather, underlying the act of *takdhīb*, which is nothing but a plain manifestation of *kūfr*. Here follow two quotations that will show in a clear light the semantic connection between them.

Verily, those who have [always] cried lies to Our signs and have been too arrogant to accept them, for them shall the gates of Heaven not be opened, and they shall never enter Paradise until a camel goes through a needle's eye.

(VII, 38; cf. 34)

We gave unto Moses the Scripture, and sent in his train the Apostles. We gave unto Jesus son of Mary signs manifest, and supported him with the Holy Spirit. Do you, then, every time there comes to you an Apostle bringing what your souls find not desirable, grow arrogant (*istakbartum*) and cry him lies (*kadhhabtum*) or slay him?

(II, 81)

I shall bring this section to an end by dealing briefly with some of the related terms. It goes without saying that *istakbara* is not the only word for the impious kind of haughtiness which has formed the subject-matter of the preceding discussion. We have, in effect, already seen an instance of such terms in the adjective '*ālī*' (cf. p. 132). In old Arabic there are a number of other words that are more or less approximately synonymous with *istakbara* (or *takabbara*). Some of them do appear in the Koran with considerable frequency and serve to spotlight, each in its way, this or that aspect of the phenomenon of human arrogance towards God.

(a) *baghā*[y]

Presumptuousness must of necessity induce one to pass beyond the proper bounds of one's sphere in social life. The verb *baghā*[y] appears to mean basically 'to act unlawfully and unjustly against others', 'to commit open wrong', out of an excess of self-conceit. Ibn Ishāq, referring to the most vehement persecution of the early Muslims by the Meccan idolaters, uses this word in the description of the situation. 'Quraish grew arrogant (*atā*, for this word see below) towards God, rejected His grace, cried lies to His Prophet, persecuted and exiled those who worshipped Him proclaiming His Oneness, who believed in His Prophet and kept to



His religion. So He gave permission to His Apostle to fight and to defend himself against those who did wrong (*ẓalama*) to them and *baghā* them'. (I, 313). The following are some of the examples of its use in the Koran.

If God were to spread [i.e. give without measure] His provision to His servants, they would surely become insolent (*baghaw*) in the earth. But He sends down within measure whatever He pleases.  
(XLII, 26)

'They would *baghā*[y]', that is, to quote the words of al-Baiḏāwī, 'they would become big with pride (*takabbarū*) and work great corruption (*afṣādū*) out of insolence (*baṭar*). This last word will be explained presently. Here we are merely concerned to point out the fact that the famous commentator explains *baghā*[y] by *takabbara* (plus: doing corruption from unbounded self-confidence). This interpretation finds a strong confirmation in the following passage:

Qārūn [i.e. Korah] was of Moses' folk. But he *baghā*[y] against them, because We had given him so much of the treasures that even the keys thereof were a burden too heavy for a troop of strong men. When His folk said unto him, 'Do not exult (*tafrah*), for, verily, God loves not those who exult. ...Do good (*aḥsin*, for this word see above, p. 59), just as God did good to thee. And crave not to work corruption (*fasād*) in the earth, for, verily, God loves not those who work corruption', He replied, 'What I have been given I owe wholly to my own knowledge.'  
(XXVIII, 76-78)

Here we see the word *baghā*[y] given, as it were, a contextual interpretation. It is, in the first place, equated with another verb *fariḥa* ('Do not exult' *lā tafrah*), meaning 'to be overjoyed at something'. From this it becomes clear that *baghā*[y] refers in particular to the fact of Korah's being exultant in his wealth, being intoxicated with his worldly power. Then, *fasād* 'corruption' is mentioned as a concrete manifestation in behavior of the inner state denoted by *baghā*[y]; the meaning of *fasād* itself is contextually defined in part by being contrasted with *iḥsān* 'doing good', that is, doing works of kindness and charity. In the following verse, the word is applied in its nominal form *baghy* to the conduct of Pharaoh, pursuing Moses and the Israelites.

Thus We brought the children of Israel across the sea [the Red Sea], and Pharaoh and his hosts came pursuing them in *baghy* and 'adu, till, when he was about to be drowned, he said, 'I do believe that there is no god but He in whom believe the children of Israel.

I am a pious believer [lit. one of those who have surrendered].  
'Now at last? Before this thou hast ever rebelled against [Me],  
and hast done much corruption.'  
(X, 90-91)

The word 'adu in the text, which appears often in combination with *baghy* (cf. for another instance, VI, 146), roughly means 'to pass beyond one's limit' and thence 'to act wrongfully'. It may be remarked that again the element of *fasād* is introduced into the context. The phrase, 'thou hast ever rebelled' ('*aṣaita*') brings out another shade of meaning contained in *baghy*.

The element of 'violence' or 'outrage' may be best perceived in the following quotation:

Whoso helps himself after having suffered any wrong (*ẓulm*) [i.e. he who finds himself constrained to have recourse to violence as the means of self-defense] — against such, there is no way [of blame]. The way [of blame] is only against those who do wrong [i.e. who take the initiative in wronging others] and behave insolently (*yabghūna*, from *baghā*[y]) in the earth. For such there is a painful torment.  
(XLII, 39-40)

#### (b) *baṭira*

In the quotation from al-Baiḏāwī, we have just met with this word in its nominal form, *baṭar*. The verb means, roughly, 'to exult (in one's own wealth, for instance) excessively', it suggests that one exults so excessively that one comes to behave insolently, with boastfulness. The Koran itself does not afford much information about the semantic structure of this word. But the following one example will serve to elucidate an important aspect of its meaning:

How many a city have We destroyed that exulted excessively (*baṭirat*) in its opulence! Look, those are their dwellings, that have been left inhabited after them, save indeed a little; We Ourselves have inherited them.  
(XXVIII, 58)

This passage may profitably be compared with that which will be given below as the second of the examples of 'atā, beginning with 'How many a city.....' It should also be remembered that the expression: 'how many a city have We destroyed that.....' is almost a cliché for describing the miserable end of the kāfirs. This shows that we are still in the domain of *kufr*.

#### (c) 'atā

'Atā is one of the synonyms of the *istakbara*, and means approximately 'to be

immoderately proud', 'to behave very haughtily', and with the preposition '*an*' denoting the movement of turning away 'from' something, means 'to turn away disdainfully from something commanded', 'to revolt against an ordinance'. Judging from many instances of its actual usage, we might perhaps safely say that '*atā*' tends to refer to the concrete, outward manifestations, whether in conduct or expression, of haughtiness, while *istakbara* seems to refer rather to the inner state of haughtiness itself. The first of the following quotations from the Koran would appear to confirm this interpretation.

Those who expect not the meeting with Us [on the Day of Judgment] say, 'Why is it that the angels are not sent down upon us, or why do we not see our Lord [i.e. if Muhammad were really God's Apostle]?' How haughty they have grown (*istakbarū*) within themselves, and with what an immoderate arrogance ('*utuwwan*', a nominal form derived from the same root as '*atā*') they behave!  
(XXV, 23)

How many a city turned away disdainfully ('*atat*', from '*atā*') from ('*an*') the commandment of its Lord and His Apostles' and We settled accounts severely with it and punished it with an unwonted chastisement.  
(LXV, 8)

But when they turned away disdainfully ('*atau*') from ('*an*') what they had been forbidden, We said to them, 'Be you apes, repelled far away!'  
(VII, 166)

(d) *ṭaghā*[y]

This verb is another synonym of *istakbara*, which plays an important role in the Koran. Starting from the radical image of water rising so high as to exceed the bounds and overflow the banks, it came to mean, as a metaphor, the attitude of contumely or rebellious pride. Thus, according to Montgomery Watt, he who *ṭaghā*[y] is 'a man who presses on regardless of obstacles, and especially regardless of moral and religious considerations, who allows nothing to stop him and has unbounded confidence in his own powers', and in the specific contexts of the Koran it denotes 'the absence of a sense of creatureliness,..... linked with disregard or denial of the Creator' (*op. cit.* p. 67). The Arab philologist, al-Baiḍāwī, in his commentary on Surah XXIII, 77 says that *ṭughyān* (nominal form) implies 'an excess in *kufr*, man's being too puffed up with pride (*istikbār*) to accept the Truth, and an open hostility against the Apostle and the believers.

*ṭughyān* — *kufr* These two words are often used in combination, showing that they are almost synonymous with each other.

That which has been sent down unto thee [Muhammad] is sure to increase many of them [i.e. the Jews] in *ṭughyān* and *kufr*.  
(V, 69; also 72)

As for the boy [killed], his parents were believers and we feared lest he [the boy who was not 'pure', i.e. irreligious, and was always 'rude' to his parents — cf. verse 80] should impose on them *ṭughyān* and *kufr*.  
(XVIII, 79)

*ṭughyān* — *takdhīb* Sometimes *ṭughyān* is given as the immediate cause of *takdhīb*. Note that in the following quotation the word appears in a slightly different form; *ṭaghwā*[y]. The meaning is exactly the same.

[The people of] Thamūd cried lies [to their Apostle] in their *ṭaghwā*[y], when the most wretched of them rose up [as God's Apostle].  
(XCI, 11-12)

*ṭughyān* — *nifāq* Reference has already been made to *nifāq*, and much more will be said in a later chapter (cf. Chap XI). *Nifāq*, in short, is the attitude of those who, when they meet the believers, say, 'We are with you; we believe in God and the Last Day', but, when they are alone 'with their Satans', say, 'How shall we believe, as fools do? We have only been mocking.' The Koran uses the word *ṭughyān* very aptly to describe this type of malicious conduct.

God mocks them [i.e. the truth is that it is not they, but God that is mocking], and leaves them to wander blindly in their *ṭughyān*.  
(II, 14)

It is to be noted that 'to wander blindly' ('*amaha*') is a verb that appears very frequently in combination with *ṭughyān*, forming thus one of the most usual set phrases in use in the Koran. The precise implication of this set phrase, 'to wander blindly in *ṭughyān*', is brought out more clearly when it is employed to describe the state of those who, well-pleased with the life of the present world, remain utterly heedless of God's signs.

*ṭughyān* — the love of earthly life

Verily, those who expect not the meeting with Us [for this phrase, see above, p. 140] and are well-pleased with the life of the present world and are comfortably at home therein, and those who are heedless of Our signs — their dwelling shall be the Fire. .... But [for the time being] We shall leave those who expect not the meeting

with Us wandering blindly in their *ṭughyān*. (X, 7-8, 12)

In the following passage, 'he who *ṭaghā*[y] and remains attached to the enjoyments of the present life' is directly contrasted with 'him who fears God and restrains his soul from worldly desires'.

As for him who *ṭaghā*[y] and preferred the life of this world, verily, Hell shall be his dwelling-place. But as for him who lived in fear and awe of the majesty of his Lord and restrained his soul from lust, verily, Paradise shall be his dwelling-place.

(LXXIX, 37-41)

*ṭughyān* → *taqwā*[y] In the last-quoted passage reference was made incidentally to 'fear' as an opposite of *ṭughyān*. The word actually used was *khāfa* which means 'to be afraid of' and is often used in the Koran synonymously with *taqwā*[y] (or more exactly, with the corresponding verb from the same root, *ittaqa*[y]). This last word is also sometimes employed actually in the text in such a way as to make a formal contrast to *taghā*[y]. Here is an instance of it:

For the godfearing [*muttaqīna*, participial form of *ittaqa*[y]] there is prepared a good dwelling-place, Gardens of Eden, the doors whereof are open to them. ....But, verily, for the *tāghīna* [part. pl. of *taghā*[y]] there is prepared an evil dwelling-place, Gehenna, wherein they shall roast.

(XXXVIII, 49-50, 55-56)

There is another verb which is used in the Koran frequently in the sense of 'fearing God': *hashiya*. This also may form a contrast with *taghā*[y]. Surah LXXIX, v. 19 may be given as an example, though the contrast in question is here exhibited rather in a loose way:

Has the story of Moses reached thee? When his Lord addressed him in the holy valley of Towa, 'God to Pharaoh, for he has become outrageous (*taghā*[y]). And say [unto him], 'Art thou willing to purify thyself (*tazakkā*[y]), for a detailed discussion of this term, see Montgomery Watt, *op. cit.*, Excursus D.) so that I may show thee the way to thy Lord and thou shalt fear (*takhshā*[y], from *hashiya*)?'

(LXXIX, 15-19)

(e) *istaghna*[y]

Closely related to *taghā*[y] in meaning is the verb *istaghna*[y] which is also used to denote an excess of self-confidence in man. But of course there is also a

considerable difference in semantic structure between the two. In the case of *taghā*[y] the underlying image is, as I noted above, that of water overflowing the banks. *Istaghna*[y] suggests the basic meaning of being rich or wealthy, the root being *GH-NY*.

Every reader of the Koran must know that it constantly emphasizes the idea of God being 'rich' *ghanī*, in the sense that He is rich enough to stand all alone, i. e. that He is absolutely independent and self-sufficient. Now in the case of man, the assumption of such self-sufficiency betrays the lack of a sense of creatureliness: it is nothing but presumptuousness and arrogance, involving as it does the denial of God as the Creator. *Istaghna*[y] is just the word for this kind of presumptuousness. It literally means 'to consider one's self rich', and consequently 'to put unbounded confidence in one's own power'. It is interesting to note that in the following passage which purports to describe the constitution of human nature in general, these two words appear side by side as almost synonymous with one another:

Nay, verily, man reveals himself to be insolent (*yatghā*[y], from *taghā*[y]), [by the fact] that he regards himself as self-sufficing (*istaghna*[y]).

(XCVI, 6-7)

In the next passage, the parallelism of construction puts this verb *istaghna*[y] in opposition to *ittaqa*[y] 'to fear God'.

Man *a'tā*[y] *wa-(i)ttaqa*[y] (v. 5)  
he who gives (alms) and fears (God)

Man *bakhīla* *wa-(i)staghna*[y] (v. 8)  
he who stints and thinks himself rich

The whole context runs as follows: 'As for him who gives alms and is godfearing and believes as true the best reward [to be given him on the Last Day], We shall surely make his way easy to the Comfort. But as for him who grudges and regards himself as self-sufficing, and cries lies to the best reward, We shall make his way easy to the Distress'. (XCII, 5-11). The antithetic relationship which is clearly observable here between 'fear' with the accompanying attribute of 'open-handedness (in God's way)' and *istaghna*[y] with the accompanying attribute of 'stinginess', would give, particularly in the light of what was said in Chap. VII, a very instructive glimpse into the semantic structure of the word *istaghna*[y].

(f) *jabbār*

He who magnifies himself to such a degree that he considers himself 'rich' enough to stand self-sufficingly tends naturally to be domineering over his fellows in all

affairs and desire to wield an unlimited tyrannical power over them. *Jabbār* is just the word for such a man. In the first example that follows the word qualifies 'heart', not man, but the reference is evidently to the *kāfirs* in general. It is noteworthy that the word appears alongside of *mutakabbir*, showing that the two are almost identical in meaning:

Thus does God put a seal on every insolent (*mutakabbir*) and *jabbār* heart. (XL, 37)

In the next one, an important sidelight is thrown on the meaning of *jabbār* by the fact that, besides being reinforced by an adjective meaning 'rebellious', it is contrasted sharply with words implying loving-kindness and piety.

And We gave him [John, son of Zachariah] discretion when yet a little boy, and grace from Us, and purity; and so he became godfearing (*taqīy*) and pious (*barr*, for this word see Chap. XIII) towards his parents, and was not insolent (*jabbār*), rebellious (*asiy*). (XIX, 13-14)

The following passage furnishes another good example of *jabbār* used in a precisely similar sort of situation. These words are put in the mouth of Jesus.

He [God] has enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I live, and piety towards my mother. He has not made me insolent (*jabbār*), miserable. (XIX, 32-33)

## Chapter X

### WORDS RELATED SEMANTICALLY WITH KUFR

The purpose of this chapter is to apply the method of semantic analysis to some of the negative value-words having a close relationship with *kufr*. As a matter of fact, since *kufr* is not only the greatest of all sins but actually functions as the very center of the whole system of negative properties, it is natural that practically all the immoral characteristics or modes of behavior recognized as such in the Koran should be related more or less intimately with it. So most, if not all, of the terms that I am going to deal with in what follows could very well have been treated as part of the subject-matter of the preceding chapter. If I treat them here separately, it is mainly for convenience of presentation. On the other hand, we shall see gradually that there is certainly a respect in which these vices are different enough from *kufr* to merit a separate chapter. The key words that will be analyzed in this chapter are five: (1) *fāsiq*, (2) *fājir*, (3) *qālim*, (4) *mu'tadī*, (5) *musrif*.

#### I *Fāsiq*

##### (a) *Fāsiq*=*Kāfir*

As I have just remarked, *fāsiq*—and, for that matter, all the remaining four terms as well—has much in common in semantic structure with *kāfir*, so much so that in many cases it proves extremely difficult to make a distinction between them. I shall begin by giving a typical example of *fāsiq* used synonymously with *kāfir*. Thus it is related concerning Abū 'Āmir, who was a well-known ascetic in the Jahiliyyah and had won the by-name of *rāhib* 'monk', and who was socially a very influential man in Medina about the time of Hijrah, that he stubbornly refused to the last to believe in Muhammad's God although most of his tribe accepted the faith of Islam, and even positively abandoned them and went over to Mecca with a few of those who remained faithful to him. Upon this, Muhammad is said to have remarked, 'Don't call him henceforward the 'monk'; but call him the *fāsiq*' (Ibn Ishāq, I, 411). Muhammad might well have used the word *kāfir* instead of *fāsiq*. Indeed, this little piece of tradition gives us an important clue as to what type of conduct tends to cause the use of this word from the standpoint of Islam, but as to the distinction to be drawn between *kufr* and *fisq* it furnishes practically no information, except perhaps that it suggests that the distinction, if there be any, must be one of degree rather than of quality. It would appear, in other words, that *kufr*, when it exceeds a certain degree, turns into *fisq*: that is, *fisq* is a higher degree of *kufr*, and *fāsiq*—one who is characterized by the quality of *fisq*—is a very stubborn and vehement kind of *kāfir*.

And it would perhaps be noteworthy that the commentator al-Baiḍāwī writes that '*fāsiq* is one who persists in *kufr*'. That this, however, is not the whole story, we shall presently see. But before turning to that point I should like to give here one verse in which *kufr* and *fisq* are completely equated with each other:

Verily, We have sent down upon thee [Muhammad] signs, tokens manifest, and none will disbelieve (*yakfuru*) therein save the *fāsiqūn* (pl. of *fāsiq*). (II, 93)

(b) Discordance between words and deeds

Apparently, the next example throws no further light on this problem, for it is obvious that it does nothing but confirm the equivalence between *fisq* and *kufr*.

Verily, they disbelieved (*kafarū*) in God and His Apostle, and died as *fāsiqūna*. (IX, 85)

What is implied here is that *fisq* is a state resulting from one's having acted in a *kāfir* way towards God and the Prophet. When, however, we give somewhat closer attention to this quotation by placing it back in the concrete context from which it has been taken, it becomes clear at once that it refers to those who, though usually making a great show of religious zeal as 'good Muslims', betray their real self by declining on some pretext to take part in the common cause of *jihād*, i.e. the Holy War, being averse to stake their life and possessions on such a precarious matter. This principle of 'all talk and no action', the lip devotion followed by downright betrayal by behavior, would seem to be the element which plays a decisive role in the Koranic verses in determining the characteristic trait of a *fāsiq*. The following words that are put in the mouth of Moses present a further example of the use of this term in an exactly similar sort of situation:

He said, 'My Lord, I have verily no command except over myself and my brother [Aaron]. Therefore do divide between us and these *fāsiq* people'. (V, 27)

This he says to God when his people, who have hitherto followed him, suddenly declare that they refuse to fight against enormous odds in spite of his encouraging words, 'Enter the gate against them! If you enter it, you are sure to win the battle. Put your trust in God, if you are really believers!' In the last analysis, this, too, is doubtless a manifestation of *kufr*, but there is added to it a special nuance, so to speak, which makes it semantically rather nearer *nifāk* ('religious hypocrisy', see Chap. XI) than pure *kufr*. And, in effect, we have an instance affirming formally and openly the exact semantic equivalence between *fisq* and *nifāk*.

Verily, the hypocrites are the *fāsiq*. (IX, 68)

The passage that follows also concerns the rich who pay lip-service to Muhammad to please him, but, when it comes to endangering their lives and possessions, turn their back on him and do not participate in the *jihād*.

They will swear to you so that you may be pleased with them. But even if you are pleased with them, God will never be pleased with the *fāsiq* people. (IX, 97)

The same is true of the following example which is taken from the same Surah. I give it here because it enumerates in detail those elements that are liable to drive the wavering believers from the way of faith into the vice of *fisq*.

If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your tribe, and the wealth you have accumulated, and the trade for which you fear depression, and the dwellings you are so contented with —if [these things] are dearer to you than God and His Apostle and fighting in His way, then wait till God brings His command to pass. God will never guide the *fāsiq* people. (IX, 24)

Again in the same Surah (v. 49–60), we have a still more detailed description of the main traits of the *fāsiq*. Instead of quoting the lengthy passage here, I shall content myself with giving in a summary way the list of the *fāsiq*-making characteristics that can be gathered from the text. (1) The *fāsiq* swear by God that they are on the side of the believers. This they only do because they are afraid of the military power of the Muslims. (2) At bottom they are disbelievers (*kāfir*), and they will continue being such until their souls depart in the state of *kufr*. (3) Their *kufr*-nature is betrayed by their conduct: they come to worship only idly, nor do they expend of his wealth in the way of God save reluctantly. Concerning this point, Muhammad is commanded to declare to them, 'Whether you expend willingly or unwillingly, it shall not be accepted from you, for you are surely a *fāsiq* people!' (4) When pressed to behave more piously, they say, 'Leave me alone and do not tempt me.' (5) If some good fortune befalls Muhammad, they get annoyed, but if some evil befalls him, they rejoice and leave him exultantly. (6) They are always grumbling about the way alms are divided; if they are given a share they are satisfied, if not, they get angry. They forget or ignore that the alms are collected to be used in aid of the poor and needy and that they, being of the wealthier class, have no claim to any share.

(c) Disloyalty or treachery



This disagreement between what they say and what they do comes out prominently in matters involving faithfulness to any bond or treaty they happen to have made. The first of the following examples discloses particularly well this relationship between their readiness to say whatever may please Muhammad and his followers and their absolute disregard for all duty of loyalty.

If they chance to have the upper hand of you, they will not observe towards you any pact or bond. They try to satisfy you with their mouths, while their hearts refuse, for most of them are but *fāsiqūna*. (IX, 8)

We found no [loyalty to] a covenant in most of them. Nay, we found most of them *fāsiqūna*. (VII, 100)

Then whosoever after this [i.e. after having made a solemn covenant with God to bear His load whatever might happen] turns away—these are the *fāsiqūna*. (III, 76)

The *fāsiqūna* who break the covenant of God after having entered into it, and sever what God has commanded to be joined, and work corruption in the earth—these shall be the losers. (II, 24-25)

In Surah XLIII, v, 45-55, we find *fisq* predicated of the Pharaoh and his people. The reason for this is as follows. God sent Moses with His clear signs to them and let him declare, 'I am the Apostle of the Lord of the worlds. They only laughed at the divine signs. When, however, God seized them with the painful torment, they addressed Moses saying, 'O thou wizard, entreat for us thy Lord by the covenant He has made with thee. We promise you, we will surely turn to the right way.' But when God removed from them the torment, they broke their word without the slightest compunction. Pharaoh, moreover, proclaimed among his people, 'O my people, am I not the lord of Egypt, with these rivers flowing under me? Can you not see? I am better than this contemptible fellow who can hardly make himself understood.' And thus he made his people waver, and finally they obeyed him.

Verily they were a *fāsiq* people (v. 54)

(d) Acting against God's Will

To act against God's Will, whether in the sense of violating a ban or in that of not carrying out a command given, is often denounced in the Koran as *fisq*

worthy of the most severe punishment. Sometimes this goes a step further and then *fisq* appears to denote the object of divine abhorrence itself.

When We ordered the angels, 'Bow in reverence to Adam', they all bowed, save Iblis, who was one of the jinn. He *fasaqa* against [i.e. committed *fisq* against, or, disobeyed] the command of his Lord. (XVIII, 48)

This example makes it undeniably clear that *fisq* in certain contexts denotes nonperformance of what has been commanded by God. The following one concerns precisely the contrary case: doing what has been prohibited.

When you traffic with each other, you should witness. Let not either scribe or witness compelled [to do anything wrong]. If you do this, it is *fusūq* [= *fisq*] in you. You should fear God. (II, 282)

'What God has prohibited' means naturally what He has found abominable, detestable. Hence *fisq* appears sometimes to come very near the meaning of 'an abomination (in the eyes of God)!' In the Koran the game of *maisir* a kind of gambling by divining arrows), eating what has been hallowed to other than God, sodomy, slandering, and the like, are all called *fisq*.

Eat not of that whereon God's name has not been pronounced [at the time of slaughtering]. Verily, it is an abominable act (*fisq*). (VI, 121)

Forbidden to you.....is the lottery by arrows. That is *fisq*. (V, 4)

Verily, We are about to send down upon the people of this city [i.e. Sodom] wrath from heaven because of that they have committed *fisq* [meaning sodomy]. (XXIX, 33)

Those who accuse [of fornication] virtuous women but bring not four witnesses.....those are *fāsiqūna*. (XXIV, 4)

(e) *Fisq* ↔ the faith

Speaking more generally, all acts that point to the underlying *kufr* as opposed to *īmān* (belief or faith) may be called *fisq*. Thus in the two following examples we see *fāsiq* directly opposed to the believer.

If they [i.e. people of the Scripture] had really believed in God

and the Prophet and that which has been revealed to him, they would not have taken these [i.e. idolaters] for their friends. But [the truth is that] many of them are *fāsiqūna*. (V, 84)

Here, it is clear, the 'people of the Scripture', that is, the Jews are called *fāsiqūna* because 'they do not really believe in God and His revelations', the undeniable evidence of that being the fact that 'they are on friendly terms with the idolaters.'

Had the people of the Scripture believed, it would, have been better for them. True, there are a few believers among them, but most of them are *fāsiqūna*. (III, 106)

The same state of affairs is described in somewhat different terms in the next passage. Note that the expression 'their hearts have hardened' is, as we saw earlier (cf. p. 122), a standing phrase for the stubbornness peculiar to the *kāfirs*, while the 'humbleness of heart' is one of the distinguishing marks of a true believer.

Is it not high time that the hearts of those who believe should become humble to the remembrance of God and what Truth He has sent down, and that they should no longer be like those who was given the Scripture formerly? They became impatient of delay, and their hearts have grown hard, so that many of them are *fāsiqūna*. (LVII, 15)

As *īmān* means to follow the guidance of God and thus to go the right way, he who does not do so is a *fāsiq*.

We sent Noah and Abraham [as Our Apostles] and put the Prophethood and Revelation among their seed. And of them there are some who are well guided (*muhtadī*), but many of them are *fāsiqūna*. (LVII, 26)

For a similar reason, 'to forget God' is to commit *fisq*. It will be noteworthy that the following verse accounts for this matter in this way: he who forgets God, God in His turn induces him to forget his own soul so that he may become a *fāsiq*.

Be you not like those who forgot God, and whom He caused to forget their own souls. These are the *fāsiqūna*. (LIX, 19)

We might add that in Surah X, v. 34, the phrase: *alladhīna fasaqū*. i.e. those

who commit *fisq*, is applied to the idolaters (*mushrikūna*) who 'associate other gods' with God. Thus it is clear that *shirk* also is a case of *fisq*.

## II *Fājir*

Concerning this word, the Koran itself does not afford much information, except perhaps that it is roughly synonymous with *kāfir*. The underlying meaning is said to be that of 'deviating'; thence it comes to mean metaphorically 'to depart from the (right) way' and then, 'to commit an immoral deed'. It is highly interesting to note in this connection that in one passage the verb *fajara* seems even to do precisely the job which is usually assigned to *kafara*: that of denoting refusal to believe in the eschatological teaching of Islam about Resurrection.

Eh, does man think that We shall not be able to assemble his bones? Yea, We are able to reshape even his finger tips. Nay, but man desires to disbelieve (*yafjura*) in what lies so far ahead, asking 'When will be that Day of Resurrection?'

(LXXV, 3-6)

There is, indeed, some uncertainty as to whether the above interpretation of the phrase, *yafjura amāma-hu* be right. If it is right — and it is possible that it is — then *amāma-hu* (lit. 'what is before him') would refer to the occurrence of the resurrection, and this would be quite of a piece with the surrounding context. Another passage may well be cited as affording a striking confirmation of the view here taken. In it we see *takdhīb* of the Day of Judgment mentioned as the characteristic mark of all *fājirs*.

Nay, indeed, the record of the *fujjār* (pl. of *fājir*) is in Sijjīn. ... Woe upon that day [i.e. on the very Day of Judgment] unto those who cry lies to the Day of Judgment! None cries lies to it save every sinful *mu'tadī* [for this word, see below, p. 161 ff]

(LXXXIII, 7-12)

In the following verse *fujūr* (nominal form of *fajara*) is formally contrasted with *taqwā[y]*, the fear (of God), with which we are by now quite familiar:

By the soul, and Him who fashioned it, and inspired into it *fujūr* or *taqwā[y]*. (XCL, 7-8)

This verse asserts that God, in creating each human soul, inspires into it either the spirit of pious fear or its contrary *fujūr*. This alone tells us a great deal

about the semantic structure of the latter word: at least it strongly suggests that the meaning of *fujūr* has much to do with that aspect of *kufṛ* which is directly opposed to the fear of God.

In fact, the word *fājir* appears sometimes alongside of *kāfir* in the Koran.

Noah said, 'My Lord, leave not upon the earth the *kāfir*, not even one of them! If Thou shouldst leave them, they will mislead Thy servants, and will beget only *fājir-kaffār* (emphatic form of *kāfir*).

(LXXI, 27-28)

Some faces on that day [i.e. the Day of Resurrection] [shall be] illumined, laughing, beaming with joy. And some faces on that day, covered with dust, overspread with darkness—these are the *kafarah* (pl. of *kāfir*)-*fajarah* (pl. of *fājir*).

(LXXX, 38-42)

Finally, I shall quote a passage in which *fājir* is opposed to *bārr*. *Bārr* is an elusive word, and it is very difficult to isolate its semantic core. We shall deal with it in Chapter XIII. For the time being we may be contented with saying that the word describes the characteristic quality of a man who is particularly obedient to God, who, moreover, manifests his pious nature by behaving with extraordinary kindness and affection towards all his neighbors, whether kindreds or strangers. The men of this type naturally go to Paradise. The *fujjār* who represent the exactly opposite type go to Hell.

Verily, the *abrār* [pl. of *bārr*] shall be in [Heavenly] bliss, while the *fujjār* [another pl. form of *fājir*] shall be in the Hell Fire, to roast therein on the Day of Judgment, nor shall they ever be removed therefrom.

(LXXXII, 13-16)

### III *Ẓālim*

The word *ẓālim*, as we have often seen, is generally translated in English by 'wrong-doer' or 'evil-doer', and the corresponding noun form *ẓulm* variously by 'wrong', 'evil', 'injustice'; and 'tyranny'. The root plays an exceedingly important role in the Koran. It is not too much to say that it is one of the most important negative value-words in the Koran. Indeed, we encounter the root on almost every page of the Scripture under a variety of forms.

The primary meaning of *ZLM* is, in the opinion of many of the authoritative lexicologists, that of 'putting in a wrong place.' In the moral sphere it seems to mean primarily 'to act in such a way as to transgress the proper limit and encroach upon the right of some other person.' Briefly and generally speaking, *ẓulm* is to do injustice in the sense of going beyond one's own bounds and doing what one

has no right to. It would be very interesting to note in this connection that the Koran repeats everywhere that God does not wrong (*yazlim*, a verb form of *ẓulm*) anyone 'even by the weight of an ant' or 'by a single date-thread' (cf. for instance IV, 44, 52). In one passage God Himself declares that He will never wrong the believers.

I do absolutely no wrong [lit: I am not a *ẓallām*, an emphatic form of *ẓālim*] to My servants!

(L, 28)

The 'wrong', in the case of God, refers mostly to the Last Judgment; in other words, and in more concretely terms, it consists in God's paying every soul in full according to what deeds it did in its earthly life. If it did a good deed, He will double it; if it be a bad deed, He will reward it with a fit punishment; in any way man will never be wronged.

Today [this is said on the very Day of Judgment] each soul shall be rewarded according to that which it has earned. There shall be no wrong (*ẓulm*) on this day.

(XL, 17, cf. XLV, 21)

Fear a day in which you will be brought back to God. Then, each soul shall be paid in full that which it has earned, and they shall not be wronged (*yuzlamūna*, pass. construction)

(II, 281, cf. VIII, 62)

If only thou couldst see when the angels bring to death the *kāfirs*, beating them on their faces and their backs, 'Taste you the chastisement of burning. All this is on account of what your hands have sent on before. You see, God is no *ẓallām* towards His servants.

(VIII, 53, III, 177-178)

Divine punishment may visit a community of men even before the Day of Judgment, in this very world. The numerous ruins of the townships that flourished in ancient times are regarded as visible 'signs' of the dreadful wrath of God. But in such cases, too, God is said to have destroyed the townships only when they fully deserved it, and that only after He had repeatedly given them warnings through His Apostles. For if He had punished men while they were doing right, or—in the case of the wrong-doers—without warning, He would have acted unjustly (*bi-ẓulmin*, lit. 'with *ẓulm*').

Thy Lord would never destroy towns with *ẓulm*, while their people were doing good deeds (*muṣliḥūna*, from *ṢLḤ*, see below, chap.

XIII, 1.)

(XI, 119)

Thy Lord would never destroy towns with *ẓulm*, while their people were heedless [i.e. without giving warnings beforehand].  
(VI, 131)

Thus men are made to bear the consequences of their own deeds. Even the torment of the Hell Fire which all evil-doers are to suffer will after all be of their own making. Hence the concept of *ẓulm an-nafs*, (lit. 'wronging of the soul', i.e. doing wrong to one's own soul, or one's self) which we find expressed very frequently in the Koran in connection with that of the divine chastisement of evil-doers. 'God wrongs nobody; man wrongs himself.' (cf. p. 94)

Whoso does that [i.e. transgresses the limits set by God] has wronged his soul [or himself] (*ẓalama nafsa-hu*) (II, 231)

As for the *kāfirs*, their wealth shall be of no avail at all, nor their children, against God. They are the fellows of the Fire, dwelling therein forever. The likeness of what they spend in this life of the world is as the likeness of wind, ice-cold, that smites the tilth of a people who have wronged themselves, and damages it. God wrongs them not, but they wrong themselves.

(III, 113, cf. IX, 71, X, 45)

Coming down now from the sphere of God's activity to that of human conduct, we may remark, to begin with, the occurrence of *ẓulm* is possible in two different directions: (1) from man to God, and (2) from man to man. In the first direction, *ẓulm* consists in man's transgressing the limits of human conduct imposed by God Himself, while in the second, it is to go beyond the bounds of proper conduct in social life, recognized as such by the society, though, as a matter of actual fact, it proves extremely difficult or even impossible to distinguish between the two directions, for God in Islamic conception interferes in the minutest details of human affairs. Thus in Surah XII — the Chapter of Joseph (see p. 37) — v. 75, the committing of a theft is assessed in purely human terms, on the human level, as a case of *ẓulm*.

'This shall be the penalty. He in whose bag the goblet is found shall be the penalty [i.e. he shall pay the penalty by letting himself detained]. We [Egyptians] are accustomed to requite the *ẓālim* in this way.'

(XII, 75)

But in Surah V, v. 43, we find the same act talked of as a case of *ẓulm* committed against God:

But whoso repents after his wrong-doing (*ẓulm*) [which means here contextually the act of stealing], and makes amends, verily, God will turn towards him [i.e. forgive his sin]. Lo, God is forgiving, merciful.  
(V, 43)

In the Koran, the rules of human conduct in society as established by God and imposed upon men, are called 'the bounds of God' *ḥudūd Allāh*. He who remains all his life within the God-made bounds will be allowed to enter, on the Day of Judgment, Gardens beneath which rivers flow, while he who transgresses His bounds (*yata'adda ḥudūda-hu*) will be thrown into the Fire, to dwell therein forever (Surah IV, 17).

These [i.e. all the minute rules regulating divorce] are the bounds of God, and whosoever transgress them not. All those who transgress the bounds of God — they are the *ẓālimūn*. (II, 229)

The same thing may be also expressed in terms of *ẓulm an-nafs* (see, above, p. 154):

These are the bounds of God, and whosoever transgresses the bounds of God has wronged himself. (LXV, 1)

God's Will is unfathomably deep, and it is not for the human mind to probe it to its depths and to understand how and why it works as it works. So it comes about very frequently that the reason for a particular 'bound' set remains an unsolvable mystery to men. A 'bound' is there simply because God has decreed so. Such is, for instance, the case with the Biblical image of the Tree in the Garden: 'We said, "O Adam, dwell thou, and thy wife, in the Garden, and eat freely thereof wherever you like. But draw not nigh this Tree; if you do, you will be of the *ẓālim*."' (II, 33; XII, 18)

There are, however, many cases in which the setting of a 'bound' is understandable in terms of the social good; this occurs when the particular 'bound' is clearly calculated to produce some direct benefit to the life of people in a community. Thus God decrees in the Koran that there should be no usury, and He designates usury by the name of *ẓulm*: 'Wrong not (*lā taẓlimūna*), and you shall not be wronged (*lā tuẓlamūna*). (II, 279). In Surah IV, v. 12-16, after a description in full detail of the rules concerning inheritance, it is declared: 'These are the bounds of God. Whoso obeys God and His Apostle, He will admit him into gardens beneath which rivers flow.....but whoso disobeys God and His Apostle and transgresses His bounds, He will admit him into a Fire, to dwell therein forever.' (17-18). The rules concerning divorce, which I have just referred to, may be

taken as another example: 'O Prophet, when you divorce women, divorce them after they have reached the determined term. Calculate the term, and fear God your Lord. Do not drive them out of their houses, nor let them go unless they commit a manifest indecency. These are the bounds of God, and whoso transgresses the bounds of God has wronged himself.' (LXV, 1). It will be easy to see that the 'bounds' of this kind are destined to develop later into the 'Law' *shari'ah* of Islam.

But 'bounds' may be understood in a much wider sense. Then the word *zulm*, as 'transgression of a bound', would denote, as suggested at the outset, any kind of human act that goes beyond the proper limit and encroaches on the right of others. It is extremely interesting to remark here that *zulm* in this sense may very well represent the point of view of the idolaters; in one passage, namely, the violence done by the believers to idols is described, from the standpoint of the idol-worshippers, as a flagrant case of *zulm*.

Then he [Abraham] broke them [the idols] into pieces ..... They said, 'Who dared to do this with our gods? Surely he is a *ẓālim*.' (XXI, 59-60)

Thus to practise an act of *zulm* is to hurt someone seriously without any conceivable reason. So in the last analysis *zulm* is essentially relative to the standpoint one takes from which to look at the matter. In the passage just quoted the destruction of the idols does constitute a piece of *zulm* because, viewed from the angle of the polytheists, there is no reason at all why this should be done, while from that of the believers the same act would be amply justifiable. In similar fashion, the expulsion of Muslims from their homes by the *kāfirs* only because they, i.e. the Muslims, say, 'Our Lord is God', is, for them, an undeniable act of *zulm*, being justified by no conceivable reason. From the standpoint of the *kāfirs*, however, the Islamic belief in One God provides abundant reason for behaving towards the believers in that way.

Sanction is given to those who take up arms because they have been wronged (*ẓulimū*) ..... , who have been expelled from their homes without any reason (*be-ghairi ḥaqqin*) only because they say, 'Our Lord is God.' (XXII, 40-41)

In the same way, Muslims would become wrong-doers (*ẓālim*) if they should repulse the poor brethren for the sole reason that they are poor, because that does not in any way constitute a justifiable reason.

Drive not away those [poor believers] who call upon their Lord at morn and evening, desiring His countenance. No responsibility for them is upon thee, and no responsibility for thee is upon them, that thou shouldst drive them away and become one of the *ẓālim*. (VI, 52)

In another passage, Muslims are admonished against doing wrong (*ẓulm*) by 'devouring' without a justifiable reason the property of orphans entrusted to their care.

Verily, those who devour the property of orphans wrongfully (*ẓulman*), they do but devour fire in their bellies; they shall roast burning flames. (IV, II)

Chiefly, however, the word is employed in the Koran from the standpoint of the Muslims, and naturally, it has most to do there with the characteristic conduct of the *kāfirs* towards God and the believers.

[a] *ẓālim* — *kāfir*

Let us begin with the case where *zulm* is used almost synonymously with *kufr*. We may profitably point out in passing that al-Baiḍāwī, commenting on the word *ẓālim* that appears in Surah VI, v, 136 in the place of *kāfir*, remarks that the former is 'more general and more comprehensive in meaning' than the latter.

How shall God guide a people who have disbelieved (*kafarū*) after they became believers and bore witness that the Apostle is true, and manifest signs came unto them? God guides not *ẓālim* people. (III, 80)

We often find some of the most characteristic traits of *kufr* classified in the category of *zulm*. Thus, he who does not listen to a divine revelation but mockingly and calls the Apostle a magician or poet, is sometimes labeled as *ẓālim* instead of *kāfir*:

There never comes unto them a new reminder [i.e. revelation] from their Lord but they listen to it while playing, with their hearts distracted. They confer secretly, those wrong-doers (*alladhina ẓalamū*), saying, 'Is [not] this aught but a mortal like yourselves? What, will you go to magic when you can see?' ..... They say, 'A jumble of nightmares! Nay, he has forged it. Nay,



he is a poet'. (XXI, 2-3, 5)

Who is more *ẓālim* than he who, being reminded of the signs of his Lord, turns away therefrom and forgets what his own hands have sent forward [to the Day of judgment]? (XVIII, 55)

Such is also the case with those who 'plunge deeply into God's signs, a common cliché for religious scepticism which brings into the domain of pure faith vain arguing or wrangling about God and His revelations. That this type of scepticism is usually called *kufṛ* I have already explained in detail (see Chap. IX). In the following passage those people are called *ẓālim*.

When thou [Muhammad] seest those who plunge into [the cavilling of] Our signs, turn away from them until they begin to plunge into some other subject. Or if Satan should make thee forget, sit not, after thou hast remembered, with the *ẓālim* people. (VI, 67)

Similarly, 'those whose hearts are hardened' is, we have seen, a standing phrase for the *kāfir*. In Surah XXII, v. 52, they, too, are called *ẓālim*.

We know also that the malignant policy of obstructing the path of God is highly characteristic of the *kāfirs*. All acts of intriguing against Muhammad and his followers belong in the category of *ẓulm* no less than that of *kufṛ*.

Who is more *ẓālim* than he who obstructs the places of worship of God, that His name be not mentioned therein, and endeavors to destroy them? (II, 108)

Sometimes we find the two words used side by side in one and the same passage:

The curse of God is surely on the *ẓālim* who debar [men] from the way of God and desire to make it crooked, while in the Hereafter they do disbelieve (*kāfirūna*). (XI, 21-22; VII, 43)

Verily, those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) and obstruct the way of God, have widely gone astray. Verily, those who disbelieve and do wrong (*ẓalamū*), God will not forgive them. (IV, 165-166)

Concerning the golden Calf of Moses' people, to which reference has been made more than once, it is written:

'Moses came unto you [children of Israel] with manifest signs,

but you worshipped the Calf in his absence, and you were *ẓālim*' ..... They were made to drink deep the [spirit of the] Calf into their hearts because of their *kufṛ*.

(II, 86, 87; see also II, 48, 51, 54)

It is not only those who are *kāfirs* themselves that are accused of *ẓulm*, but even those who take *kāfirs* for friends—and that even if they be their own fathers or brothers—are denounced as *ẓālim*. Note that this attitude implies the most radical break with the social pattern of the Jahiliyyah based on the natural bond of kinship by blood.

O believers, take not your fathers nor your brothers for friends if they prefer disbelief (*kufṛ*) to belief (*imān*). Whoso of you takes such ones for friends, those are the *ẓālimūna* (pl.). (IX, 23)

#### (b) *ẓulm*—*shirk*

We saw in the preceding chapter that there is a remarkable sort of semantic equivalence between *kufṛ* and *shirk* ('polytheism'). Since now the categories of *kufṛ* and *ẓulm* are identical, or overlap, in many essential respects, there must be, we may suspect, a similar relationship of equivalence also between *shirk* and *ẓulm*. In effect, abundant evidence of this is provided by the Koran itself. Thus in one passage, Loqman the Wise says to his son, admonishing him:

'O my son, associate none with God. Verily, association (*shirk*) is a great *ẓulm*.' (XXXI, 12)

Here we find *ẓulm* directly predicated of idolatry. The next example is semantically no less important in that it brings out the triple relationship between *kufṛ*, *shirk*, and *ẓulm*.

Those are *kāfirs* (*la qad kafara*) who say, 'God is the Messiah, Mary's son', notwithstanding that the Messiah himself said, 'O children of Israel, worship God [alone], my Lord and your Lord. Verily, those who associate with God other [gods], God has forbidden for him Paradise, and his final abode shall be the Fire. For the *ẓālim* there shall be no helpers. (V, 76)

Of men there are such as take unto themselves rivals to God, and love them with a love [which is suitable only] for God.....Ah if only those who do wrong (*ẓalamū*) saw, in the face of the chastisement, that the supreme power belongs entirely to God. (II, 160)

In a similar way, the folk of Moses who made out of their ornaments the golden Calf as an object of worship are accused of having committed a *ẓulm*:

They took it [i.e. the Calf] and they became *ẓālim*. (VII, 147)

(c) *takdhīb*—*ẓulm*

*Takdhīb*, or 'crying lies to God's signs', which we discussed above as one of the most characteristic aspects of *kufr*, belongs naturally to the sphere of *ẓulm*. One example may suffice.

Evil is the likeness of the people who have cried lies to the signs of God, for God guides not the *ẓālim* people. (LXII, 5)

(d) *ẓulm*—forgery against God

Practically the same is true of the vice of *iftirā[y] al-kadhīb* 'forging a lie (against God)' which has already appeared in our exposition several times. *Takdhīb* is to call the Truth brought by somebody else a lie, while *iftirā[y]* is to invent a lie. In some cases, the two appear side by side in one and the same verse and are labeled altogether as *ẓulm*.

Who is more *ẓālim* than he who forges a lie against God or cries lies to His signs? Verily, the *ẓālim* shall not prosper. (VI, 21)

Who is more *ẓālim* than he who forges a lie against God and cries lies to the Truth, when it reaches him? (XXXIX, 33)

The following quotation furnishes an ideal example describing with a touch of realism the characteristic conduct of such 'forgers'.

Who is more *ẓālim* than he who forges a lie against God, or says, 'I have received a divine revelation', when naught has been revealed to him, and he who says, 'I will reveal the like of that which God has revealed'?

If only thou couldst see when these *ẓālimūna* (pl.) are in the throes of death. (VI, 93)

(e) *ẓālim*—*fāsiq*

Mention is made in the Koran of Moses' folk who dared to distort a revealed saying and changed it into something which, though similar in outward form, is essentially different from the original, so as to ridicule it. Those who did this are called 'wrong-doers' and this behavior itself *fisq*. (For *fisq* and *fāsiq*, see above, p. 145 ff.).

The wrong-doers (*alladhīna ẓalamū*) changed a saying into something other than that which had been told them. So We sent down wrath from heaven upon those who did wrong because of what they did of *fisq* (*kanū yafsuqūna*).

I may fitly conclude my discussion of the meaning structure of *ẓulm* with an examination of another word which seems, semantically, to have very much in common with it, namely, *rahaq*. This word appears in the Koran twice in succession in Surah LXXII (v. 6 and v. 13). As to the exact meaning of the word in each of these two passages there is a good deal of disagreement among the old commentators. At least some clue, however, may be found in the context itself.

There are certain persons among mankind who used to take refuge with certain persons of the jinn, and they [i.e. the jinn] increased them in *rahaq*, so that they came to think, as you also did, that God would never raise up anyone. (LXXII, 6-7)

Here, evidently, the increase in *rahaq*, whatever its literal meaning, is considered the immediate cause of disbelief in Resurrection, which is nothing other than the *takdhīb* to which I have referred several times in the course of this book as one of the most characteristic traits of the *kāfirs*. In this respect, *rahaq* is roughly synonymous with *kufr* or *ẓulm*.

When we [believers] heard the [divine] guidance, we believed therein. And whoso believes in his Lord will have to fear neither diminution nor *rahaq*. (ibid. 13)

'Diminution' here refers, in all probability, to the unjustifiable diminution of the reward on the Day of Judgment. And this makes us suspect at once that the other word *rahaq* may very well mean something very near, if not exactly the same as the notion of *ẓulm*. So far as the Koranic usage of the word is concerned, this is the furthest limit beyond which it is too dangerous to go.

#### IV *Mu'tadī*

(a) *mu'tadī*—*ẓālim*

*Mu'tadī* is a participial form of the verb *i'tadā[y]* which means approximately 'to pass beyond', 'exceed one's proper limit', and thence, 'to act aggressively and unjustly against someone.' It will be easy to see that this word and the preceding one, *ẓulm*, have large common areas of meaning between them. Indeed, in many important cases, the word *mu'tadī* behaves as a perfect synonym of *ẓālim*. Take,

for instance, the following verse:

Fight in the way of God with those who fight with you, but transgress (*ta'tadū*, from *i'tadā[y]*) not. Verily, God loves not the transgressors (*mu'tadīna*, pl.). (II, 186)

The words 'transgress not', put more concretely, would mean, 'Do not challenge your enemy to a fight from your side'. Substantially the same thought might very well have been expressed in terms of *ẓulm*. To be compared with this verse is Surah XXII, v. 40, which was cited above on page 156.

This close semantic relationship between *ẓulm* and *i'tadā[y]* is more directly brought to light by another example. In the formula of testimony which we find given in Surah V, v. 106 as suitable to be used by those who attend in the capacity of legal witnesses the bequeathing of property, it is stated most clearly that one's being a *ẓālim* is an immediate result of one's having 'transgressed'. The passage runs as follows:

Let them swear by God, 'Our testimony is more reliable than their testimony. We never transgress (*i'tadainā*), for then we should surely be of the *ẓālim*. (V, 106)

(b) *i'tadā[y]*—the transgressing of God's 'bounds'

It may profitably be recalled here that I have also greatly emphasized above that aspect of *ẓulm*, which consists in transgressing 'the bounds of God'. It is noteworthy that the word *i'tadā[y]*, too, is used in the same sense in exactly similar situations. The following are some of the examples.

You know of those among you who transgressed (*i'tadau*) the Sabbath so that We said unto them 'Be ye apes, driven away!' (II, 61)

Commenting on a similar phrase—'they transgress, or break, (*ya'dūna*) the Sabbath'—that appears in Surah VII, 163 al-Baiḍāwī remarks that it means: they go beyond the bounds of God by catching fish on the day of Sabbath. Of the same kind are the following two instances.

God has forgiven what is past [i.e. what was done in the pre-Islamic days when God's 'bounds' were not known yet], but whoso transgresses (*i'tadā[y]*) after this [i.e. after promulgation of God's 'bounds' regulating the minute details of right conduct during the period of pilgrimage], for him there shall be a painful chastisement. (V, 95)

O believers, do not make unlawful the good things which God has made lawful for you; transgress (*ta'tadū*) not; verily God loves not the transgressors (*mu'tadīna*, pl.). (V, 89)

'Lawful' (*ḥalāl*)—'unlawful' (*ḥarām*) are two important terms inherited from the older, primitive stage of taboo-language, that still play in the koran in the capacity of semi-legal terms a remarkable role, to be integrated later into the system of Islamic jurisprudence. But with these two we shall have to deal at length in Chap. XIII. Suffice it to note for the moment that, at the Koranic stage, they represent part of the 'bounds' of God, and that any attempt at introducing a change into the revealed system of *ḥalāl*—*ḥarām* is regarded as a genuine case of 'transgression'.

It may be noted in this connection that the practice of sodomy is sometimes characterized as an act of 'transgression'. In such a case, the notion of the 'transgression of the bounds of God' approaches conspicuously to that of an 'abomination', that is, more concretely, any object to which God's abhorrence is directed. This view is confirmed by the fact that sodomy is most usually described as *fāḥishah* (for this word, see later, Chap. XIII) which is the very word for an 'abominable thing'.

What, do you approach the males out of all beings, and leave your wives that your Lord has created for you? Nay, but you are people who transgress (*ādūna* from the same root as *i'tadā[y]*). (XXVI, 165-166)

(c) *i'tadā[y]*—*kufr*

Now it will be clear from what precedes that the meaning of *i'tadā[y]* comes very near that of *aṣā[y]* 'to be rebellious', 'to disobey (the commands of) someone'. In fact, these two verbs often appear side by side in the Koran. I give here an example that is semantically of particular interest. The passage concerns the 'children of Israel' who followed Moses out of Egypt and indulged in all sorts of ungodliness. It will be noticed that 'rebellion' and 'transgression' are interpreted in terms of *kufr*.

So there befell them humiliation and poverty, and they drew upon themselves wrath from God. All this was because they used to act in a characteristically *kāfir* way (*yakfurūna*) towards the signs of God, and slew the Prophets without right; all this was because they disobeyed (*aṣau*, from *aṣā[y]*) and always transgressed (*ya'tadūna*). (II, 58)

In the following instance, the *takdhīb*, which I have repeatedly referred to as

the most characteristic feature of *kufr*, is put in a close semantic relation with the act of transgression:

Woe that day [i.e. the Day of Judgment] unto those who always cry lies (*mukadhdhibina*, pl. of *mukadhdhib*, 'one who cries lies'), those who cry lies to the Day of Judgment! None cries it lies save every sinful (*athim*) transgressor (*mu'tadī*). (LXXXIII, 10-12)

## V *Musrif*

We have seen above that both *ẓālim* and *mu'tadī* contain the notion of 'transgressing the due bound' as the core of their meaning structure. In *musrif* we have another word with a very similar semantic constitution. It comes from the verb *asrafa* (*isrāf*), the so-called 'fourth' derivative verbal form of *SRF*, and means basically 'to exceed, or, transgress the right measure'. But, unlike *ẓulm* and *i'tidā[y]*—and this is particularly obvious in the former—which carry an unmistakable implication of enmity, aggressiveness, or encroachment upon another's rights, *isrāf* seems to mean primarily 'to go beyond the due limits (in any matter whatever)' without any such implication; 'to behave too extravagantly' and thence, 'to be immoderate', 'to commit excesses'. Thus in the following two examples, the quality of *isrāf* is attributed to the act of eating and drinking immoderately: the act in itself is by no means wrong, but it becomes morally wrong when it is carried to an absurd extreme. And this it is that is called *isrāf* here and is declared to be the object of God's hatred:

O children of Adam, take your adornment at every mosque, and eat and drink, but do not commit *isrāf* (*tusrifū*), for He [i.e. God] loves not the *musrif*. (VII, 29)

He it is who produces gardens trellised as well as untrellised, the date-palm, and crops of various taste, and olives and pomegranates, alike and unlike. Eat you of the fruit thereof when they fructify, and bring the due thereof upon the harvest day, but commit not *isrāf*. Verily He loves not the *musrif*. (VI, 142)

In the next passage the word is applied to the custom of sodomy among 'the people of Lot'.

Lot said to his people, 'How dare commit such an abominable act as never has been committed before this by any being in the world? Lo, you approach men with lust instead of women. Indeed,

you are a *musrif* people.

(VII, 78-79)

The following is a passage from the speech of the Prophet Ṣālih, which he addresses to his people so as to admonish them for their godless way of life. Here the *musrif* is one who spreads nothing but corruption in the land and never does right.

So fear God and obey me, and obey not the command of the *musrif* who do corruption (*yufsidūna*) in the earth and never does right (*yusliḥūna*) (XXVI, 150-152)

As regards the meanings of 'do corruption' and 'do right', which determine the inner structure of the concept of *musrif* in this passage, much will be said when we come to discuss the problem of 'good' and 'bad' in the Koran.

Probably—though there is room for a little uncertainty about this point—the word *musrif* which appears in the next passage, must be understood in a similar way. The contextual situation is as follows. When Pharaoh was about to kill Moses on the pretext that Moses, if left free and alive, 'would surely spread corruption (*fasād*, from the same root as *yufsidūna* which we have just encountered) until in the end he would corrupt even the traditional religion of the people', a believing man of Pharaoh's people who kept concealed his faith, tried to admonish him against taking a rash step. He said:

'What, will you kill a man only because he says, "My Lord is God", when he has brought you the manifest signs from your Lord? If he be a liar, his lying will be against himself, but if what he says be true, there will smite you somewhat of that which he promises you. Verily, God guides not him who is *musrif*, *kadhdhāb*.

(XL, 27-29)

The word *kadhdhāb*, as we saw earlier, is the emphatic form of *kādhīb*, meaning something like 'a big — or habitual — liar'. The *musrif* refers most probably to Pharaoh's words suggesting that Moses will surely go on spreading corruption in the land. If this interpretation be right, what this 'believing man' means to say would amount to this: If, as Pharaoh asserts, Moses is really a big liar (*kadhdhāb*) and if he does nothing but corruption in the land (*musrif*), he will go to perdition of his own accord, for God will never guide a man qualified by such abominable properties.

It will be easy to see that the meaning of *musrif* in contexts of this kind comes remarkably near that of *kāfir* or *ẓālim*. In effect, a few verses down in the same passage we find the same word *musrif* employed in reference to those who entertain

grave doubts as to the sincerity of the Apostle and indulge in vain disputes concerning the signs of God.

Joseph brought you before the manifest signs, yet you never ceased being in doubt (*shakk*) concerning what he brought you ..... thus does God lead astray him who is *musrif*, *murtāb* ('doubter'). [This refers to] those who like to wrangle about God's signs without any authority given them. This is extremely hateful in the sight of God and in the sight of those who believe. Thus does God put a seal on every proud (*mutakabbir*) and insolent (*jabbār*) heart.

(XL, 36-37)

Nothing will show more evidently the fact that *isrāf* in certain contexts behaves almost synonymously with *kufr*. Grave doubts concerning God's revelations, vain disputes about God, hearts too proud and insolent to believe in Him, these are all well-known marks of the *kāfirs*.

This impression is confirmed further when we see the term *musrif* applied to 'those who ascribe partners' to God, that is, those who indulge in idolatry: so *mushrik* (see above p. 126 ff.) = *musrif*.

You urge me to disbelieve (*akfura*) in God, and to associate (*ushrika*) with Him I know not what [i.e. idols of suspicious origin], while I urge you to come unto the Mighty Forgiver. There can be no doubt but that [the idols] unto which you call me have no claim in this world or in the world to come, that our [final] return will be unto God, and that the *musrif* will be the inhabitants of the Fire.

(XL, 45-46)

In the following verse, the word appears in verb form: *asrafa* lit. 'he transgressed the due bound'. It is contextually plain that the reference here is to a man who passed all his life in follies and merry-makings, utterly heedless of the signs of God that He sent down — 'Our signs came unto thee, but thou wert heedless of them'. This, of course, is neither more nor less than genuine *kufr* such as I have described above in minute details.

Thus We recompense him who *asrafa* [in the world] and believed not in the signs of his Lord.

(XX, 127)

I shall bring this section to an end by quoting a passage in which the word *musrif* implies most clearly the act of committing excesses in revolt against an explicit prohibition of God.

Therefore we prescribed for the children of Israel that whoso kills a human being unless it be in retaliation for a man killed or some corruption done in the land, it shall be as if he had killed mankind altogether ..... Already Our Apostles have come unto them with signs manifest, but many of them even thereafter continue to commit *isrāf* (*musrifūna*). (V, 35-36)

The three important terms which I have just discussed are all based on the fundamental notion of 'exceeding the due bounds'. I should like to mention here one more word that has evidently the same sort of semantic structure. The word I have in mind is *shaṭaṭ*. The basic meaning of this word seems to be that of going far beyond the due bounds in any matter. Here are two Koranic examples :

We are two litigants [so said the two strange persons who entered upon David]; one of us has injured the other, so judge between us; transgress (*tushṭif*) not, and show us the right path.

(XXXVIII, 21)

Here, it is clear, non-*shaṭaṭ* is contextually equivalent to 'justice' in exercising jurisdiction. The next example is of a somewhat different nature :

Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We will never call upon any god beside Him, for then we should have said a *shaṭaṭ*.

(XVIII, 13)

It stands contextually plain that the *shaṭaṭ* here refers to the much blamed sin of forging a lie against God. A striking confirmation of this interpretation is afforded by the verse (14) which immediately follows the one just cited, where we read: 'And who does greater wrong (*aḍlam*) than he who forges (*iftarā*[y]) against God a lie (*kadhib*).' So *shaṭaṭ* = *kadhib*. As every one sees, the *kadhib* 'lie' here must be explained in terms of 'going beyond the limit of truth'.

In this chapter I have analyzed five important terms standing for various phases or aspects of *kufr*. It should not, of course, be taken in the sense that they exhaust the sphere of reprehensible qualities. There are a number of other words in this domain that adequately deserve at least passing attention. These, however, will be touched upon more conveniently in Chapter XII where I shall deal with the representative terms of the sphere of praiseworthy properties, with the only exception of the word *nifāq*, which is important enough to necessitate a more detailed scrutiny separately.



## Chapter XI

### RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

The whole of this short chapter will be concerned with the semantic analysis of *nifāq*, which is customarily rendered in English as 'hypocrisy'. Roughly speaking, *nifāq* consists in professing faith with the tongue while secretly disbelieving in the heart. Thus it is obvious that the discordance between words and deeds in matters that concern the religious faith, which I have pointed out above (Chap. X, I, b) as one of the characteristic features of *fisq*, is the most basic element in the constitution of the meaning of *nifāq*. I have also cited there (p. 147) an important verse in which it is even openly declared that 'the religious hypocrites are the *fāsiq*.' (Surah IX, 68). In similar fashion, we find in Surah LXIII, v. 6 the following remarkable words concerning those who do hypocrisy in religious matters: 'It will be all the same to them whether thou [Muhammad] askest forgiveness for them or thou dost not ask forgiveness for them, for God will not forgive them in any way. God guides not a *fāsiq* people'. This, however, does not exhaust the whole story of the kind of religious hypocrisy which is here spoken of. Far from coinciding completely with *fisq*, the word *nifāq* has a very peculiar sort of semantic structure; indeed, so peculiar that some people have thought it necessary to treat *nifāq* as a distinct basic category which takes rank with *kufr* and *imān* in dividing the entire domain of Islamic morals into three main regions.

According to this view, men are to be classified into three grand categories: (1) *mu'min* 'believer', (2) *kāfir* 'disbeliever', and (3) *munāfiq* 'hypocrite'. As al-Fakhr ar-Razī says in his 'Great Commentary', the *mu'min*, i. e. one who is qualified by *imān*, is he whose heart and conscience are religiously clear and good; the *kāfir* is he whose distinguishing mark is stubborn perseverance in refusal to believe; while the *munāfiq*—which is, grammatically, a participial form corresponding to *nifāq*—is he who pretends to believe but whose conscience is against that. (ar-Rāzī, *at-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, comm. on Surah II, 7).

There is no denying that *nifāq* has much in common with *kufr*, for, in the last resort, it is nothing but a particular type of disbelief. So it is hardly surprising that the Koran itself should appear to make no essential distinction between the two. Thus in the first of the following examples, we see 'disbelievers' and 'hypocrites' lumped together as the class of the enemy of God:

O Prophet, fight strenuously against the *kuffār* (pl. of *kāfir*) and the *munāfiqīn* (pl.), and be harsh with them. Gehenna shall be their ultimate abode, an evil journey's end. (LXVI, 9)

This last point, that is, the decree of God that the final abode of the *munāfiq* should be the Hell Fire, is very significant in that it discloses the essential connection of *nifāq* with *kufr*, for the common punishment suggests that the two are equal in the degree and nature of sinfulness. In Surah IV, v. 144, we read: 'Verily, the *munāfiqīn* shall be in the very depths of the Fire, and thou shalt not find any helper for them.'

In the next quotation which—although there is not actually mentioned the word *munāfiq*—clearly refers to the 'hypocrites', *nifāq* happens to be more directly identified with *kufr*.

O Apostle, let them not grieve thee who vie one with another in the *kufr*, those who pretend with their mouths, 'We believe,' while their hearts believe not. (V, 45)

This being the case, it is most natural that some of the Arab philologists have come to count *nifāq* as one of the varieties of *kufr*, and called it *kufr an-nifāq*, that is literally 'the *nifāq* kind of *kufr*'. And yet, in spite of all this, there is a certain respect in which *nifāq* would appear to be more aptly treated as an independent semantic category standing between 'belief' and 'disbelief'.

Let me, first, give a good example showing most clearly this mind-way nature of *nifāq* wavering between the two extreme poles.

The *munāfiq* seek to deceive God, when in fact it is God who deceives them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up languidly to be seen of men, and do not remember God save a little, wavering between this [and that], neither to these nor to those. (IV, 141)

The same is true of the example that follows. The passage refers to the famous battle of Uhud in which things turned unfavorably to Muhammad and his followers, a golden opportunity to distinguish true believers from those who had only paid lip service to the new religion.

What befell you the day the two hosts met, it occurred by God's leave, that He might distinguish between those who [truly] believed and those who only pretended to be [believers] hypocritically (*nāfaqā*, verb form). When it was said to these latter, 'Come now, fight in God's way,' or 'repel [the disbelievers],' they said, 'If we knew how to fight we would surely follow you.' They were that day nearer to *kufr* than to *imān*, saying as they did with their mouths that which was not in their hearts. But God knows best

what they hide.

(III, 160-161)

The passage just quoted seems to show plainly that the semantic category of *nifāq* is in no way a water-tight compartment situated between *kufr* and *īmān*, but rather an extensive range of meaning with uncertain boundaries. It is, so to speak, a category of a conspicuously dynamic nature, that may extend with elasticity towards either direction to shade off almost imperceptibly into *kufr* or *īmān*.

In some cases, *nifāq* conveys the impression that it is born in the very midst of belief. When, namely, a believer says what he does not, a first step has already been taken towards *nifāq*; he is still a believer but his conduct is most hateful in the sight of God. This point is brought out by the following example.

O you who believe, why say you that which you do not? Most hateful it is in the sight of God that you say that which you do not.

(LXI, 2-3)

Such an attitude originates, according to the Koran, in 'doubt', that presumptuous doubt as to the truth of God's revelations, which gnaws at one's heart, even after one has accepted the faith of Islam.

On the Day of Judgment, we are told, all hypocrites, men as well as women (*munāfiqūn* and *munāfiqāt*) standing on the brink of the Hell Fire, will cry out to the believers going to Paradise, 'Wait! Wait for us. Were we not with you in the earthly world?' To this the believers will reply: 'Yea indeed, but you fell into temptation; you hesitated and entertained doubts (*irtābūn*); vain hopes deluded you, until at last there came the final judgment of God. The Deceiver [i.e. Satan] deceived you concerning God.' (Surah LVII, 13)

A step further towards *kufr*, and he who 'says what he does not' becomes a genuine *munāfiq*. The type just described was one who began to entertain doubts about God in the midst of Islam. The type which I am about to describe is represented by those who remain from beginning to end outside the faith of Islam, but, instead of declaring outright that they are disbelievers, accept Islam outwardly and take the faith for a cloak under which to work all sorts of evil. We find in the Koran a number of very interesting descriptions of such typical 'hypocrites'. Here I give two of the instances that are particularly well-suited for elucidating the real nature of *nifāq*.

When the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) come to thee [Muhammad] they say, 'We bear witness that thou art surely the Apostle of God'. But God knows that thou art His Apostle, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are all liars (*kādhībūn*). Having made the faith

(*īmān*) a covering, they try to bar from the way of God. Verily, evil is that which they have been doing. All this is because they accepted belief and then disbelieved (*kafarā*), wherefore their hearts are sealed so that they understand naught. When thou seest them, their bodily appearance may very well please thee, and when they speak thou listenest to what they say. But [in reality] they are like timbers propped up. They think every noise is directed against them. They are the [real] enemy, so beware of them. May God annihilate them. How perverted they are! And when it is said unto them, 'Come now, the Apostle of God will ask forgiveness for you!' they avert their heads, and thou seest them turning away, being too big with pride (*mustakbirūna*). (LXIII, 1-5)

The next passage contains no explicit mention of the word *nifāq* itself, but no one denies that it describes in concrete terms the most characteristic marks of the 'hypocrites'. As it is too long to be quoted in its entirety, I shall content myself with giving a summary of the main points.

(1) They are liars. They say, 'We believe in God and the Last Day', but in reality they are not believers (*mu'minīna*). They only try to deceive God. (II, v. 7-8)

(2) They try to deceive the believers too. When they meet the believers, they say, 'We believe', but when they are alone with their Satans [i.e. their leaders, meaning thereby, according to the commentators, the Jews who have these people perfectly under their control], they say 'We are with you. We are only mocking them.' (v. 13)

(3) They are fools (*sufahā*). When it is said to them, 'Believe as other people do', they reply, 'Shall we believe as fools believe?' The truth is that they are the fools, but they do not know. (v. 12)

(4) They work corruption. They are the workers of corruption (*muḥsid*, for this word see next chapter), but they are not aware of it. When it is said to them, 'Do not work corruption in the land', they say, 'We are doing nothing but good'. (v. 10-11)

(5) Sickness in their hearts. They are born with an incurable sickness in their hearts, which God has increased because of their bad conduct. (v. 9) This metaphor of 'sickness' or 'disease' *marāḍ* in the heart is one of the most important elements in the semantic constitution of *nifāq*. In fact, we see the peculiar expression, 'those in whose hearts is a sickness' recurring incessantly in the Koran to denote the 'hypocrites'.

(6) The likeness (i.e. simile) of these people. They are like a man who kindles a fire, and when it lights up around him God snatches it away to leave him in darkness. Deaf, dumb, and blind, he cannot return. (v. 16)

(7) Thus they go on wandering blindly in their insolence (*tughyān*, see above, p. 140 ff). They have bought error (*ḍalālah*) at the price of divine guidance (v. 14-15).

The analysis of this passage has, I believe, disclosed better than any lengthy discussion both those features which *nifāq* shares in common with *kufṛ* and those that are quite peculiar to *nifāq*.

Originally the word *nifāq* (or *munāfiq*) seems to have been used to refer to the citizens of Medina, who joined the Prophet's camp after he migrated from Mecca to their city. Standing in sharp contrast to those Meccan believers who followed him with an unshakably firm faith in God and His Apostle, many of the Medinese believers were conspicuously lukewarm in belief and always 'wavered between this side and that'. Having accepted Islam largely under compulsion, these people remained opportunists. The slightest misfortune that happened to Muhammad was enough to raise doubts in their minds and to sway their belief in God. It was, it appears, to the Medinese of this type that the word *munāfiq* was applied at first. In the nature of the case, however, *nifāq* could not be restricted to the Muslims of Medina. And in fact, in Surah IX we find the conduct of some Bedouin described as being of a *nifāq* nature. It is declared there: 'The Bedouin are generally more stubborn in *kufṛ* and *nifāq* and less inclined towards accepting the bounds of God' (v. 98). And again: 'Some of the Bedouin around you are *munāfiqun*' (v. 102).

All those, in a word, who harbor a gloomy doubt—'sickness'—in their hearts, and yet pretend to be faithful believers, are fully entitled to be called *munāfiq*.

## Chapter XII

### THE BELIEVER

Just as *kufṛ* constitutes, as we have seen, the pivotal point round which turn all the qualities belonging to the sphere of reprehensible properties, so *īmān* 'belief' or 'faith', is the very center of the sphere of positive moral properties. 'Belief' is the real fountain-head of all Islamic virtues; it creates them all, and no virtue is thinkable in Islam, which is not based on the sincere faith in God and His revelations.

As for the semantic structure of 'belief' itself, it may be admitted that we know already all the essential points, for, by trying to analyze semantically the principal terms of negative valuation, we have also been describing the characteristic features of the true 'believer' in the Islamic sense, as it were, from the back side. So my main task in this chapter will consist simply in turning all I have said up to now the other way round.

#### I BELIEF AS OPPOSED TO KUFṚ

That *kufṛ* is the exact antithesis of 'belief' is a point which requires no laboring. I think I have made it sufficiently clear that it is this basic antithesis between *īmān* and *kufṛ* that furnishes the ultimate yardstick by which all human qualities are divided, in Islamic outlook, into two radically opposed moral categories. The grand dualism of *mu'min* 'believer' and *kāfir* 'disbeliever' is the very basis and keynote of the whole ethical system of Islam. Everywhere in the Koran this fundamental opposition is perceptible. I shall give here a few of the most typical examples.

Verily, God will admit those who believe (*āmanū*) and do good works (*ṣāliḥāt*, for this word see the following chapter) into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, while those who are *kāfir* (*kāfirūna*) take their enjoyment [in the present world], eating as the cattle eat, but the Fire shall be their final dwelling-place. (XLVII, 13)

Here, it may be remarked, the radical contrast between 'believer' and 'disbeliever' is brought out in reference to two essential points: (1) what they do in this world—the believer is only concerned to do pious works, while the *kāfir* passes his days in the pursuit of worldly pleasures—; (2) what they obtain the Day of Judgment—the believer will get the reward of Paradise, while the *kāfir* goes to Hell. Substantially the same is true of the following quotation.

As for those who believe and do good works, they shall rejoice in a meadow green, but as for those who disbelieve and cry lies to Our signs and the meeting of the Hereafter, in the torment [of Hell] they shall be placed. (XXX, 14-15)

In the example that follows, the same contrast is made to stand on the difference in the 'Way' in which one fights:

Those who believe (*āmanū*) fight in the way of God, while those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) fight in the way of the idols (*ṭāghūt*). (IV, 78)

The following two examples describe *kufa* and *imān* in terms of temporal succession, or to be more concrete, they suggest that *kufr* and *imān* are two contradictory personal properties which a man may assume interchangeably, though in the nature of the case they cannot possibly reside in one person both at the same time. There is, in other words, constant danger of apostasy.

O you who believe (*āmanū*), if you obey a sect of those to whom has been given the Scripture, they will turn you back, after you have become believers (*ba'da imāni-kum* lit. 'after your belief'), into disbelievers (*kāfirīna*). How can you disbelieve (*takfurūna*) when you hear the signs of God recited to you, and among you is His Apostle?

Whoso disbelieves (*kafara*) in God after he has become a believer — save him who [does so] under compulsion and whose heart remains unwavering in his belief (*imān*) — but whoso finds satisfaction in disbelief (*kufr*), upon them shall be wrath from God, and theirs shall be a mighty chastisement. (XVI, 108)

'To buy *kufr* at the price of *imān*' is a very characteristic Koranic phrase for apostatizing from Islam to idolatry.

Verily, those who purchase *kufr* at the price of *imān*, they do not hurt God at all, and theirs shall be a painful chastisement.

(III, 171)

If 'belief', in this way, is diametrically opposed to *kufr*, there is no reason at all for surprise if we find it opposed to other moral terms that are more or less synonymous with *kufr*.

Is he who is a believer (*mu'min*) like unto him who is a *fāsiq* (see Chap. X, 1)? They cannot be equal. (XXXII, 18)

Here *fāsiq*, in place of *kāfir*, is made the antithesis of 'one who believes'. In the next example, three vices *kufr*, *fusūq*, and *iṣyān* ('rebellion' or 'disobedience'), are tied up all in a bundle and opposed to *imān*.

God has endeared *imān* and has beautified it in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you *kufr* and *fusūq* and *iṣyān*. (XLIX, 7)

## II THE IDEAL BELIEVER

What sort of a man, on Muhammad's view, is 'one who believes'? What are — or, should be — the characteristic features of 'belief'? How, in a word, in an ideal believer expected to behave socially as well as religiously? These are most important questions we may ask about *imān*, and that not only generally but also from our specific point of view, for the answers to them will at once determine the semantic contents themselves of the words meaning 'belief' and 'believer' in the Koranic language. Let us begin by taking up a passage in which 'belief' is considered exclusively in its purely religious aspects. This passage is of particular relevance to our research in that it furnishes an almost perfect verbal definition of the 'true believer'.

Only those are [true] believers who, whenever God is mentioned, their hearts quiver, and when His signs are recited to them, they [i.e. the signs] increase them in belief, and upon their Lord they place reliance, those who attend divine service steadfastly, and expend [in alms] of what We have bestowed upon them. These are the believers in the true sense (*ḥaqqan*). (VIII, 2-4)

This verbal definition pictures 'the believer in the true sense of the word' as a genuinely pious man, in whose heart the very mention of God's name is enough to arouse an intense fear, and whose whole life is determined by the basic mood of deep earnestness. The next quotation is more concerned to describe the outward manifestations of such inner piety:

[True believers are] those who go back repentant [to God], those who worship [Him], those who praise [Him], those who fast, those who bow down, those who fall prostrate [before Him], those who enjoin the good and forbid the evil, those who keep within God's bounds. Give thou good tidings to the believers (*mu'minīna*, pl.)

(IX, 113)

The genuine faith must work as the most powerful motive that actuates men to good works; if not, the faith is not genuine. The fundamental attitude of contrition and awe before God, the unquestioning obedience to God's will, the heart-felt gratitude for divine benefits — all these elements that go to characterize the Islamic faith at its highest, must of necessity materialize in the officially recognized 'good works' (*ṣāliḥāt*) which we shall examine in the following chapter; they must, further, find expression almost in every action that is done in the ordinary man-to-man relations of life. Here I give two quotations which will shed light on this phase of the phenomenon of *imān*. They enumerate those acts that are deemed particularly befitting to the true 'believers'.

(a) The servants of the Merciful [i.e. the true believers] are those who walk upon the earth with modesty and, when the *jāhil* address them, answer, 'Peace [be upon you]!';

(b) Those who pass the night before their Lord, prostrate and standing;

(c) Those who say, 'Our Lord, turn away from us the torment of Gehenna. Verily, the torment thereof is atrocious torture; how evil it is as an abode and a dwelling!';

(d) Those who, when they expend, neither act immoderately [the vice of *isrāf* as described above, p. 69] nor yet grudge, but [take] a proper stand between the two [extremes];

(e) Those who call not upon any other god with God, nor kill any living being which God has forbidden save when it is justifiable, nor commit fornication;

(f) And those who testify not falsely, and, when they pass by idle talk, pass by honorably;

(g) those who, whenever they are reminded of the signs of their Lord, fall not thereat deaf and blind;

(h) those who say, 'Our Lord, give us enjoyment of our wives and offspring, and make us a model to all those who fear [God].

(XXV, 64-68, 72-74)

In summary we would say that the characteristics that may reasonably be expected in an ideal believer are, according to this passage, as follows: (a) the basic attitude of *ḥilm* as I described above in detail (see p. 61), (b) constant devotional exercises, (c) fear of the Last Judgment, (d) almsgiving as the most important of the works of genuine piety, without going, however, to the extreme of the impulsive and boastful generosity of the Jahiliyyah, (e) keeping away from the Jahili acts which God has sternly forbidden, such as polytheism, the slaying of a living being

without right, fornication, (f) avoidance of perjury and idle talk, (g) a delicate sensitiveness to the deep import of the revealed words, (h) serene and restful happiness in the life of this present world, based on the expectancy of the Hereafter.

The portrait which the next passage gives of the ideal believer is essentially similar to this one. It runs as follows:

Prosperous indeed will be the believers who are humble in their prayers, who turn away from idle talk, who are active in giving alms, who hold back their genitals save from their own wives and what their right hands possess [i.e. the slaves], .....who keep faithfully their trusts and their covenant, who are assiduous in observing their prayers. These are the inheritors who will inherit Paradise, to dwell therein forever. (XXIII, 1-6, 8-11)

To this portrait we might add one more touch to complete it. What I have in mind here is a short passage in Surah XXXIII, in which absolute obedience to whatever God decrees is required of all believers as the *sine qua non* of the really genuine faith.

It becomes not a believer, whether man or woman, when God and His Apostle have decided any affair, to have his or her own choice in the affair. Whoso disobeys God and His Apostle, he has indeed gone astray into error manifest. (XXXIII, 36)

Now that I have given a general picture of the ideal 'believer' in the Koranic view, I shall next proceed to a more detailed analysis of some of the personal properties on which the Koran places especial emphasis as being characteristic of the true believers.

### III FEAR

Muhammad's preaching, particularly in the earlier period of his prophetic career, is distinguished by the flood of most impressive eschatological visions. I have already pointed out repeatedly in the course of this book that the Prophet made *taqwā* [y] 'fear' the very heart and pivot of his religious teaching. The fear of the Last Judgment and the Lord of the Day — that is the most fundamental motive of this new religion that underlies all its aspects and determines its basic mood. To believe in God means, briefly, to fear Him; the concisest possible formula of definition for 'believer' is, as we have seen, 'one who trembles in fear before God'.

(1) 'Belief' = 'fear'



It will be easy to understand now why in the Koran 'belief' and 'fear' are everywhere used synonymously with each other. One example may suffice:

The *kāfirs* are lured by the beauty of the present world, and they laugh at those who believe, but those who fear (*ittaqau*, verb form) [i.e. the believers] shall be placed above them on the Day of Resurrection. (II 208)

The synonymy of 'belief' and 'fear' may also take the form of an implication: if A then B. Note that, as a matter of actual fact, B (that is, 'fear' in this case) mostly takes the form of an imperative sentence. 'Fear (*ittaqū*) God, if you are true believers,' (Surah V, 62, 112, and *passim*).

#### (2) Antonyms of 'fear'

If 'fear' forms in this way the central element of the conception of 'belief', it is only natural that *kufr* should represent its opposite. The *muttaqī* ('one who is characterized by *taqwā*[y]') is in the Koran, constantly contrasted with the *kāfir*. Here is one of the typical examples:

The likeness of Paradise which is promised unto those who fear (*muttaqūna* pl.), with rivers flowing underneath it, its food eternal, and also its shade. This is the reward of those who fear (*ittaqau*), while the reward of the disbelievers (*kāfirīna*) is the Fire. (XIII, 35)

Sometimes we find *ẓālim* (see above, chap. X, III) behaving as the antonym of *muttaqī*.

Verily, the wrong-doers (*ẓālimīna* pl.) are friends of each other, while God is the friend of those who fear (*muttaqīna*). (XLV, 18, see also XXVI, 9-10)

#### (3) Synonyms of *taqwā*[y]: I *khāshyah*

There are a number of words in Arabic that are more or less identical in meaning with *taqwā*[y]. Some of them actually appear in the Koran. Of these synonyms of *taqwā*[y] the most important are without doubt *khāshyah* — the corresponding verb is *khāshiya* — and *khauf*, both being roughly equivalent to the English word 'fear'. I shall begin with a brief analysis of the meaning of the former word.

The synonymy — at least within the bounds of the Koranic language — of *khāshyah* with *taqwā*[y] is best shown by the following example in which the verb *khāshiya* is used in an analytic phrase which is precisely designed to explain

the word *muttaqī*.

The godfearing (*muttaqīna*) who fear (*yakhshauna*, from *khāshiya*) their Lord in the Unseen, being affected with the fear (*mushfiqūna*, another synonym) of the [Last] Hour. (XXO, 50)

The said synonymy is also attested — though somewhat in a looser way — by the fact that *khāshyah* and *taqwā*[y] often appear alongside of each other in one and the same sentence, with almost exactly the same meaning.

Whoso obeys God and His Apostle, and fears (*yakhsha*, from *khāshiya*) God and fears (*yattaqī*, from *taqwā*[y]) Him, such will be the [ultimate] gainers. (XXIV, 51)

We saw above that Paradise is promised to those who are characterized by the property of *taqwā*[y]. Exactly the same is true of him 'who *khāshiya* his Lord'; another piece of evidence that there is, in such contexts, no notable difference at all between the words in question.

Verily those who believe, and do good works, ..... their reward is with their Lord: Gardens of Eden underneath which rivers flow, therein to dwell forever. .... Such [a reward] is for him who fears (*khāshiya*) his Lord. (XCVIII, 7-8)

It may be remarked, further, that in the passage just quoted the phrase 'he who *khāshiya* his Lord' is used evidently as a substitute for 'believer'.

The word *khāshyah*, it appears, belongs to the class of words marked by semantic expressiveness. Judging by the actual usage in the Koran, it describes an overwhelming emotion of violent terror that affects the senses. This facet of its meaning is best brought to light by the following example:

God has sent down the best discourse in the form of a Scripture ..... whereat a chill creeps over the skins of those who fear (*yakhshauna*) their Lord, but after a while, their skins and their hearts soften at the remembrance of God. This is the guidance of God, whereby He guides whomsoever He likes (XXXIX, 24)

The dynamic expressiveness of the word is brought out equally well by the following example. It is obvious that the *khāshyah* of God is here being considered to be charged with something like explosive energy.

If We sent down this Koran upon a mountain, thou [Muhammad] wouldst see it humbled, rent asunder by the fear (*khashyah*) of God.  
(LIX, 21)

In so far as the Koranic Arabic is concerned, the verb *khashiya* takes as its 'object' almost invariably God. Sometimes, however, the 'fear' happens to go in the wrong direction. And then it is Man, not God, that forms the 'object' of the verb. The following passage is of particular interest in that it emphasizes explicitly that the proper object of *khashyah* should be God and not Man. The reference is to the occasion when the Prophet married Zainab, one of his cousins. Zainab was the beloved wife of Zaid, the Prophet's freedman and adopted son, one of the most loyal of all the early Muslims. One day, in Zaid's absence, Muhammad saw Zainab and was visibly attracted by her superb beauty. She told her husband the impression she had made on the Prophet. Upon this, Zaid decided to divorce her so that Muhammad might marry her. Muhammad hesitated to accept this offer, because he was apprehensive of the scandal it would raise among the believers if it became known.

Thou [Muhammad] wast [when thou didst decline the offer] hiding in thy heart that which God was to bring to light [i.e. the desire to marry Zainab]; thou didst fear (*takhshā* [y]) men when it was rather God that thou shouldst fear.  
(XXX, 37)

Finally I shall give a good example of the use of the word *khashiya* in a non-religious context. The 'object' of fear in this case is Pharaoh and his hosts, or rather the fact of being overtaken by them.

We revealed unto Moses, 'Depart with My servants [i.e. the believers — here, the Israelites in Egypt] by night, and strike for them a dry path in the midst of the sea. Thou shouldst not fear (*takhāf*, from *khauf*) overtaking, neither shouldst thou be afraid (*takhshā* [y]).  
(XX, 70-80)

Incidentally, the passage here quoted has brought to light the fact that *khashyah* may be replaced by another word, *khauf* without occasioning any notable change in meaning. To this latter word we shall presently turn.

#### (4) Synonyms of *taqwā* [y], II *khauf*

Properly, the word *khauf* seems to denote the natural emotion of fear in general. It may naturally denote fear caused by some unusual, mysterious phenomenon. Thus in the Koran the word is used repeatedly in reference to what Moses felt

when he saw sticks and ropes miraculously changed into writhing snakes. Here I give two typical examples.

'Throw down thy staff' [this is said by God to Moses]. And when he saw it quivering as if it were a serpent, he turned back and took to his heels. 'Moses, fear (*takhaf*) not. The Messengers [of God] should not fear (*yakhāfu*) in My presence.  
(XXVII, 10)

They [i.e. the magicians of Egypt] said, 'Moses, either thou wilt throw, or we shall be the first to throw.' He said, 'Nay, you throw [first].' And lo, their ropes and staffs were made to appear, by their sorcery, to move about [as if they were snakes]. There upon Moses felt within himself a fear (*khīfah*, same as *khauf*). So We said unto him, 'Fear (*takhaf*) not. Thou shalt surely overcome [their sorcery].'  
(XX, 68-70)

It is quite natural that this emotion of *khauf* should be aroused by God's 'signs', particularly those that concern the reward of Hell. God sends down these 'signs' precisely to cause fear (*khawwafa* or *takhwif*) in the minds of the careless men.

And We do not send [any Apostle] with signs save as a means of causing fear (*takhwifan*). .....We will cause them to fear (*nukhawwifu*), but it only serves to increase them in great *tughyān* (see p. 140).  
(XVII, 61-62)

Verily, I fear (*akhāfu*) for you the chastisement of an awful day.  
(XXVI, 135)

All this is for him who fears (*khāfa*) My majesty and fears (*khāfa*) My threat.  
(XIV, 18)

A step further, and the 'object' of *khauf* becomes God Himself — or, indeed, Satan in the case of the disbelievers.

That is only Satan who would make his partisans fear (*yukhawwifu*). So fear (*takhāfū*) them not, but fear (*khāfū*) you Me, if you are believers.  
(III, 169)

That *khauf* in the last sentence — 'fear you Me, if you are believers' — is a perfect synonym of *taqwā* [y] will be self-evident if we compare it with another verse from another Surah, in which substantially the same meaning is conveyed

precisely by the latter word.

This [in reference to a description that precedes of the Fire] is wherewith God causes His servants to fear (*yukhawwifu*). 'O my servants, so fear (*ittaqū*) Me!' (XXXIX, 18, see also XVI, 2)

There are two more synonyms of *taqwā*[y] worthy to be mentioned here: one is *ashfaqa*, which mostly appears in the participial form of *mushfiq*, and the other is *rahiba*.

As for the former of the two, we have already met with an instance of its use in an earlier place. The word, properly, seems to mean something like 'being affected with fear, anxiety, and solicitude'. So far as we can judge from the actual usage of the word in the Koran, there seems to be no noteworthy difference between it and the three preceding words for the emotion of fear.

Those who believe not therein [i.e. in the Last Hour] desire to hasten it, while those who believe are fearful (*mushfiqūna*, pl.) of it because they know that it is the Truth. (XLII, 17)

Sometimes this word is used side by side with *khashyah*:

Verily, those who are fearful (*mushfiqūna*) for fear (*khashyah*) of their Lord, and those who believe in the signs of their Lord, and those who associate not partners with their Lord, and those who give [in alms] what they give, with their hearts trembling (*wajilah*), [thinking] that they are about to return unto their Lord — all these vie in good deeds, racing with each other for them. (XXIII, 59-63)

They are fearful (*mushfiqūna*) for fear (*khashyah*) of Him. (XXI, 29)

Concerning the second of the two terms mentioned above, *rahiba*, the Koran does not provide much information. Suffice it to notice here that, according to the Koranic usage, this word is nearly synonymous with *taqwā*[y]. The synonymity is best perceivable in the following passage, in which the same meaning content happens to be expressed twice in succession by means of *rahiba* and *ittaqā*[y]:

God says, 'Take not to yourselves two gods. God is surely only One God. So Me do you fear (*irhabū*, from *rahiba*). His is indeed what is in the heavens and in the earth. His is the religion for

ever. Other than God then will you fear (*tattaqūna* from *ittaqā*[y])? (XVI, 53-54)

In the next quotation, the 'hypocrites' are severely accused of being more fearful of powerful men than of God, the implication being that it is God that is the only proper object of *rahbah* (nominal form of *rahiba*).

You [the Muslims in the ascendant] arouse stronger fear [*rahbah*] in their bosoms than God. This is because they are a people who understand naught. (LIX, 13)

We might add that the participial form of this verb, *rāhib*, lit. 'one who fears (God)' is the word in Old Arabic for the Christian monk devoted to religious exercises in his cell.

#### IV THANKFULNESS

*Shukr* 'thankfulness' and *taqwā*[y] 'fear' represent the two proper types of human reaction to God's signs. Of the very remarkable place 'Thankfulness' occupies in the whole system of Islamic morals I have so often spoken in the preceding that there should be no further need to labor the point here. Indeed, in an important sense 'thankfulness' is, in Islam, another name for 'belief'. To understand this, we have only to recall that in Chap. IX we interpreted the word *kufi* precisely in terms of *lack* of thankfulness.

##### (1) *shukr* ↔ *kufi*

First of all, I shall give a few examples showing how *shukr* is essentially and fundamentally opposed to *kufi* in the Koranic outlook.

Said [Solomon when he saw a miracle], 'This is of my Lord's grace, that He may try me, whether I am thankful (*ashkuru*) or thankless (*akfuru*). Whoso is thankful (*shakara*) is only thankful for the good of his own soul, while whoso is thankless (*kafara*) [is so only to the hurt of his own soul]. (XXVII, 40)

If you are thankless (*takfurū*), God is quite independent of you; only He is not pleased to find ingratitude (*kufi*) in His servants. But if you are thankful (*tashkurū*), He will be pleased with it in you. (XXXIX, 9)

Your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are thankful (*shakartum*) I will surely

give you more, but if you are thankless (*kafartum*), verily, My chastisement shall be terrible. (XIV, 6-7)

In the following passage, *shirk*, or the 'ascribing of partners to God', takes the place of *kufr* and is opposed to *shukr*, as the most characteristic manifestation of 'thanklessness'.

You call upon Him humbly and in secret, 'If only Thou deliverest from this [danger], we shall surely be of the thankful (*shākirīna*)'. Say, 'God delivers you from this and from every affliction, yet you associate partners (*tushrikūna*) with Him.' (VI, 63-64)

## (2) God's signs and *shukr*

In the preceding section, I pointed out that God sends down His signs, especially those concerned with Hell and the Fire, as a means of 'causing fear' (*takhwīf*) or 'threat' (*wa'id*). The 'signs' of God are there also to arouse the feeling of deep gratitude in the minds of men; and this is particularly true of those that reveal Him as an infinitely gracious and merciful God. The Koran never tires of emphasizing the benevolence which God bestows upon man. And in return for all the precious gifts He bestows upon him, man is expected to show Him his deep gratitude.

Sometimes the 'sign' is nothing other than the marvellous creation of man:

He began the creation of man from clay, then He made his progeny out of a jet of despised water, then He shaped him, and breathed into him of His spirit. And He created for you hearing, and sight, and hearts. Little thanks you give (*tashkurūna*)! (XXXII, 6-8)

Sometimes the 'sign' is the alternation of night and day (XXVIII, 73, and *passim*), or the sending of rain-clouds whereby God quickens the earth after death (XLV, 4, LVI, 68, etc.), or the cattle with which He has enriched man (XXXVI, 71-73), or again the ships like huge mountains that sail in the sea ('If God will, He may still the wind, and then they would have to remain motionless on the back thereof' XLII, 31); in short, everything that contributes in some way or other towards the maintenance and furtherance of human existence in this world. The Koran constantly returns to these 'signs' of divine benevolence, and in the vast majority of cases the description ends with the complaint that man is ever ungrateful.

Verily, God is gracious towards men, but most of them do not give thanks (*yashkurūna*). (X, 61, XXVII, 75)

Why, then, do you not give thanks?

(LVI, 69)

## (3) Mutual thankfulness

It would be highly interesting to observe that the 'thankfulness' in its perfect form is, in the Koranic conception, not one-sided; it should be mutual. If the duty of being thankful to God's favors devolves on man, God, on His part, is expected to respond to this act of thankfulness with thankfulness. Such mutual give and take of *shukr* is the ideal form of relationship between God and men. Besides, it could not be otherwise; since 'God is best aware of those who are really thankful for his benevolence' (VI, 53).

Whoso does good (*khair*, for this word see below, Chap. XIII) of his own accord, verily, God is thankful (*shākir*), He knows it well.

(II, 153)

Whoso desires the Hereafter and, being a believer (*mu'min*), strives after it persistently — those, their striving shall be received with thanks (*mashkūr*). (XVII, 20)

In Surah LXXVI, after a very detailed description of the everlasting enjoyments of Paradise, it is declared that all this is the well-merited reward for the 'striving' of the believers, which has been gratefully received by God.

Verily, all this is a reward for you. Your striving has been received with thanks (*mashkūr*). (LXXVI, 13-22)

## V ISLĀM AND MUSLIM

As we saw in an earlier chapter, *islām* (from the verb *aslama*) means literally 'submission' or the act of surrendering one's self entirely to someone else's will, and *muslim*, which is grammatically the participial-adjectival form of *aslama*, is 'one who has surrendered'. The supreme importance of these terms in Muhammadanism is shown by the well-known fact that 'Islām' is the very name of this religion, while 'Muslim' is a member of the religious community established by Muhammad.

The origin of these peculiar appellations can be traced back to a passage in the Koran itself. The passage is important also for our specific purpose because its general context gives a very instructive glimpse into the meaning the word *islām*.

Say, 'We believe in God and that which has been sent down upon us, and that which was sent down upon Abraham and Ishmael,

Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given unto Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets from their Lord; we make distinction whatsoever between them, surrendering as we do unto Him (*la-hu muslimūna*). And whoso desires to have other than the Surrender (*islām*) as religion, it will not be accepted of him, and he shall be among the losers in the Hereafter. (III, 78-79)

On an earlier occasion I have pointed out also a very peculiar case in which, in reference to the nature of the desert Arabs, the act of *islām* is definitely distinguished from *īmān*. *Islām*, we are told, is but the very first step in the faith, a shallow belief which has not yet penetrated deep into the heart. So all 'believers' are naturally 'muslims', but the reverse is not always true.

The Bedouin say, 'We believe (*āmannā*). Say, [Muhammad, unto them], 'You do not believe yet. Say rather, "We have surrendered (*aslamnā*)", for the belief (*īmān*) has not permeated your hearts'..... The [true] believers (*mu'minūna*) are those who believe in God and His Apostle, and afterwards never doubt, but struggle with their wealth and their lives in the way of God, these are the faithful. (XLIX, 14-15)

It must be borne in mind, however, that the *islām* here spoken of refers mainly to the formula, 'I have surrendered' *aslamtū*, used for the formal declaration of the faith. What is implied seems to be simply that the fact of someone having joined the community of Muslims does not guarantee that he has 'belief' in the true sense of the word. This of course does not in any way detract from the supreme religious value of *islām* as an inner act of the complete surrendering of one's self to God's will. In this latter sense, *islām* is no less an important element of Muhammad's religion than *īmān*. Only, the element of *islām*, as its name itself suggests, represents rather the aspects of 'weakness' peculiar to Semitic monotheism — humbleness, patience, reliance, avoidance of insolence, etc. — which we discussed in detail in Chap. VI. Here is an illuminating example of the use of this word showing the full significance of 'humble submission' in this religion.

When Abraham, together with Ishmael, raised the foundations of the House, [he said], 'Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Verily, Thou art the Hearer, the Omniscient. Our Lord, make us two submissive (*muslim*) unto Thee, and of our progeny a community submissive (*ummah muslimah*) unto Thee, and show us our sacred rites, and turn towards us [i.e. forgive our sins]. Verily, Thou art the Forgiving, the Merciful'. .....

When his Lord said unto him, 'Surrender (*aslim*, imperative form of *islām*),' he said, 'I have surrendered (*aslamtū*) to the Lord of all beings.'

And Abraham admonished his sons to do the same, and Jacob likewise, [saying], 'My sons, God has chosen for you the [true] religion. So you should never die save as men who have surrendered (*muslimūna*). (II, 121-122, 125-126)

In this important passage, the deep religious meaning of 'surrendering' comes out with the most explicit clarity. And, it should be remarked, the act of surrendering is immediately identified with 'the [true] religion.' We see that the Surrender, far from being a lukewarm and superficial sort of belief, or the first fumbling step in the faith, is the very foundation on which the whole religion of Islam is to be based.

In the following passage, *muslim* is contrasted with *qāsiṭ* which means 'one who deviates from the right course (and, consequently, acts unjustly)', with the implication that *islām* is the sole right course to take.

Verily, of us some are *muslimūna* (pl.), and some are *qāsiṭūna* (pl.). Whoso has surrendered (*aslama*) such have chosen the right direction, but as for the *qāsiṭūna*, they are nothing but firewood for Gehenna. (LXXII, 14-15)

Since the Surrender here means the surrendering of one's whole being, soul and body, to God, and to God alone, a *muslim* would flatly contradict himself if he should assume a conciliatory attitude towards idolatry. In this sense *muslim* is the direct opposite of *mushrik* (see above, Chap. IX, IV).

I am commanded to be the first of those who surrender (*aslama*). [For God has said to me], 'Be not thou [Muhammad] of those who associate [i.e. the idol-worshippers] (*mushrikīna*, pl.).' (VI, 14)

Most probably, the problematic word *ḥanīf* which begins to appear in the Koran from the later Meccan period, has much to do with this conception of the exclusive — i.e. purely monotheistic — Surrender to God as the true, or right, religion. So far as we can judge from its actual usage in the Koran, *ḥanīf*, whatever its etymology, is a religious term whose semantic structure seems to comprise among other things the ideas of (1) the true religion deep-rooted in the natural predisposition in every human soul to believe in the One God, (2) absolute submission to this One God, and (3) being the antithesis of idol-worshipping. It is highly significant in this connection that Abraham, who, as we have just seen, was the first 'surrenderer', is



made the representative, or the ideal type of *ḥanīf*. The Koran emphasizes repeatedly that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, much less an idol-worshipper, but a *ḥanīf* who discovered the vanity of polytheism by meditation and logical argumentation (cf. Surah XXI, 51 ff; VI, 74 ff.) I shall give here a few examples that are most relevant to our subject.

Verily, Abraham was a paragon of virtue [*ummah*: there is a good deal of disagreement among the commentators concerning the right interpretation of this word in this context. Some take it in the most ordinary sense of 'nation' or 'community', but this gives a very odd meaning. Here I follow another, more reasonable interpretation], submissive to God, a *ḥanīf* and not of the idol-worshippers (*mushrikīna*), ever thankful (*shākir*) for His favors — that He chose him and guided him to a straight path. .... Then We revealed unto thee [Muhammad], 'Follow the religion of Abraham, who was a *ḥanīf* and no idol-worshipper'. (XVI, 121-122, 124)

In the following quotation, the contrast between *ḥanīf* and *mushrik* is particularly emphasized:

Set thy face steadfast towards the religion, as a *ḥanīf*, and be thou not of the idol-worshippers (*mushrikīna*), and call not, besides God, on what can neither profit thee nor harm thee [i.e. idols]. (X, 105)

The next two emphasize rather that the religion of the *ḥanīf* is the true 'upright' religion. The first of them, moreover, points out that the pure monotheism as represented by Abraham is the natural religion of mankind, to which all men would be led if only they followed docilely the guidance of their God-given instinct in their souls.

Set thy face steadfast towards the religion as a *ḥanīf*, in accordance with the natural disposition upon which He created mankind. There can be no altering the creation of God. That is the upright [or 'right' *qayyim*] religion, though most men know it not. (XXX, 29)

They were commanded only to worship God, making the religion pure for Him, as *ḥunafā* (pl. of *ḥanīf*), and to perform the prayer, and to give alms. That is the religion of the upright [community: the word *qayyimah* being interpreted as an epithet qualifying *ummah* which is here understood]. (XCVIII, 4)

The original words for the phrase 'making the religion pure for Him' in the passage just quoted are: *mukhlīṣina la-hu al-dīna*. The word *mukhlīṣ* is the participial-adjectival form of the verb *akhlaṣa* meaning approximately to make — or keep — pure, free from all admixture'. It is sometimes translated, more or less rightly, 'sincere' in English. The root *KH-LṢ*, under its various forms, is very frequently used in the Koran to denote the type of the pure monotheistic faith that is suggested by the term *ḥanīf*, in contradistinction to all forms of *shirk*. By 'associating' anything with God, man adulterates, as it were, his religion with foreign matters and makes it 'impure'.

We have sent down to thee the Scripture with Truth. So worship God, making thp religion pure for Him. Is not the pure (*khālīṣ*) religion for God alone? (XXXIX, 2-3)

In the following passage, the same act of 'keeping the religion unmixed' is mentioned in conjunction with the 'surrender' *islām*, showing the most intimate relationship between the two.

Say, 'I am commanded to worship God, maintaining my religion pure for Him. And I am commanded to be the first of those who surrender (*muslimīna*).' .....

Say, 'God do I worship, making my religion pure for Him. Worship you, then, what you will apart from Him!' (XXXIX, 14, 16-17)

It may be remarked that the following quotation makes mention of Abraham as one of those who were made *mukhlīṣ* by the hand of God Himself.

Remember Our servants Abraham, Issac and Jacob, endowed with might and vision. Verily, We made them pure (*akhlaṣnā*) with something unmixed (*khālīṣah*), that is, the remembrance of the Abode [of the Hereafter]. (XXXVIII, 45-46)

This discussion of the root *KH-LṢ* 'purity' would naturally bring to mind another word which is also usually translated by 'purity' and is often identified — more or less rightly — with *islām*: I mean the root *ZKW* (*zakā*). Two important verbal derivatives of this root, one of which is the causative *zakkā*[y] ('God purifies *yuzakki*y whom He will' Surah XXIV, 21), and the other the reflexive *tazakkā*[y] (ex.: 'Who knows? He may come to purify himself *yazzakkā*[y] — for *yatazakkā*[y]') Surah LXXX, 3), have traditionally been interpreted in terms of 'purity'. So far, so good. The real problem begins to arise when we undertake to define a little more

concretely the semantic content of this 'purity'. To what kind of 'purity' does it refer?

As a matter of fact, this difficult problem has received a very careful critical scrutiny in the above-mentioned book by Montgomery Watt: *Muhammad at Mecca* (p. 68, and Excursus D.), which leaves practically nothing more to be done. So I propose here to content myself with summarizing his main points in so far as they have direct bearing on the subject of this chapter.

In the earlier period of Muhammad's prophetic activity, he remarks, the root *zakā* denotes 'moral purity' to be distinguished from 'ritual purity' which is denoted by another root *THR*. As is evident from the above-quoted passage from Surah LXXX, this 'moral purity' means practically almost the same as *islām* or religious conversion. I give here one typical example:

Thou [Muhammad] canst warn [effectively] only those who fear (*yakhshauna*, from *khashyah*, see above, p. 178) their Lord in the Unseen and perform the prayer. And whoso purifies himself (*yatazakkā* [y]), purifies himself only for his own good. (XXXV, 19)

Now, according to Montgomery Watt, such an idea of ethical purity was something novel to Arab paganism, and it had most probably been formed among the Arabs through Judaeo-Christian influence. And he points out three features as most characteristic of the meaning of the Arabic root *zakā*, namely: (1) that it is definitely distinct from the idea of ritual purity familiar to the Jahili mind; (2) that it has usually an eschatological reference; and (3) that, mostly, it denotes not so much righteousness itself as the adoption of it as one's aim or principle of life.

In the Medinan period, however; the root *zakā* seems to have become gradually confused with the old pagan idea of ritual purity, and finally it came to be connected especially with the symbolic rite of purification by almsgiving. The following passage furnishes a typical example of the use of the word in this sense:

Take thou [Muhammad] from their [referring to those who have confessed their sins and are repentant for them] possessions alms, to purify (*tutakhiru*) them and purify (*tuzakkī*) them thereby, and pray for them. (IX, 104)

Lastly I shall give an instance of the root *THR* standing for the ritual conception of purity. It is found a few verses later in the same Surah.

Never stand therein [i.e. in the mosque founded on disbelief]. A mosque there is which was founded upon Fear (*taqwā* [y]) from the very first day. That is worthier for thee to stand in. Therein are

men who love to purify themselves (*mutṭahhirīna*, part. pl.).

(IX, 109)

## VI PATIENCE

Closely allied to the foregoing is the virtue of *ṣabr* 'patience', which, in the Koranic view, counts among the distinguishing marks of the true believer. Semantically, the word is the exact opposite of *jaza'* which means the property of those who cannot bear patiently what befalls them and are quick to manifest most violent agitation; this implies that *ṣabr* itself means one's having sufficient strength of the soul to remain patient of whatever befalls and to persevere amidst all the difficulties in championing one's own cause. In Surah XIV, v. 25, we find these two properties set against each other. The words are supposed to be said by the *kāfirs* who go to Hell on the Last Day:

It is all the same to us [now] if we get impatient (*jaza'nā*) or if we are patient (*ṣabarnā*), we have no escape.

As has been said already, *ṣabr* was one of the highly prized virtues in the Jahiliyyah. Under desert conditions, patience or endurance was an imperative necessity if a tribe was to be successful at all in the fierce struggle for existence. This old nomadic virtue Muhammad transformed into a cardinal virtue of Islam, by furnishing it, so to speak, with a definite religious direction.

As in the days of Jahiliyyah, to begin with, *ṣabr* was enjoined upon the believers on the battlefield when fighting against the *kāfirs*.

Those [in the camp of David] who believed that they were to meet God said, 'How often a small host has overcome a mighty host by God's leave! God is always with the patient (*ṣābirīna*, participle, pl.)' And when they went forth against Goliath and his hosts they said, 'Our Lord, pour out upon us patience (*ṣabr*), and make our feet sure, and help us against the *kāfir* people!' (II, 250-251)

With how many a Prophet have myriads fought; they never give way at what befell them in God's way, nor did they weaken, nor did they humble themselves. God loves the patient (*ṣābirīna*). (III, 140)

Such 'patience' develops quite naturally into the spirit of martyrdom, that is, the moral strength to undergo with amazing heroism death or any other torment for the sake of persistence in religious faith. In the following passage, the magicians

of Pharaoh declare their fixed determination to remain faithful to Moses' God even if they have to suffer the most cruel penalty for following that course.

Pharaoh said, 'You have believed in Him before I permitted you to ..... You shall smart for it. I shall surely cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides. After that I shall crucify you all together.' They said, 'Verily, we turn unto our Lord. Thou dost take vengeance on us only because we have believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us. Our Lord, pour out upon us patience (*ṣabr*), and receive us unto Thee in the state of Surrender (*muṣlimīna*, lit. 'as those who have surrendered'). (VII, 120-123)

It should be noticed that here the virtue of 'patience' is made to stand in a manifest semantic relation to *islām* which we discussed in the preceding section. And a few lines down, we see the same 'patience' standing in an equally close relation to *taqwā* [y] 'fear'.

Moses said unto his people, 'Solicit help from God, and be patient (*iṣbirū*). Verily, the whole earth is God's, and He gives it for an inheritance to whom He likes among His servants. The ultimate [felicity] will fall to the lot of the godfearing (*muttaqīna*).

(VII, 125)

The torment or penalty the believers have to suffer is not in any way restricted to physical pains; it may also take the form of sneering, derision, and abuse on the part of the *kāfirs*. In this sense, the various forms of *takdhīb* and all the marks of the overbearing haughtiness, which as we saw in Chap. IX, characterize the *dis-believers*, may be regarded as so many calamities falling on the believers and calling forth the spirit of martyrdom.

Apostles before thee were also cried lies to. Only, they proved patient (*ṣabarū*) of being cried lies to and of being hurt, until Our help came unto them. (VI, 34)

Bear thou [Muhammad] with patience (*iṣbir*) what they say [against thee], and try to avoid [collision with] them graciously. Leave me to deal with those who cry lies (*mukadhdhibīna*), lords of prosperity [in this world], and do thou respite them for a while.

(LXXIII, 10-11)

[God will say, on the Day of Judgment, to the *kāfirs* in Gehenna],

'Verily, there was a party of my servants who used to say, "Our Lord, we believe (*āmannā*), so forgive us, and have mercy upon us, for Thou art the best of all the merciful ones." But you made them a laughing-stock [for this expression, see above, p. 129 ff.], so much so that you finally forgot My reminder, laughing at them. This day I have recompensed them for their patience (*bi-mā ṣabarū*, lit. 'for that they endured patiently'). Now they are the happy people'. (XXIII, 111-113)

Thus 'patience' comes to represent an essential aspect of the genuine 'belief' *imān* in God. 'Patience', we might say, is that face of 'belief' which it shows towards its enemy, human or otherwise. Living as they do in the midst of the *kāfirs* and all sorts of worldly temptations, the believers are forced willy-nilly into assuming the attitude of determined resistance. It is to this inflexible determination to persist in the genuine faith in the face of unrelenting attacks of the enemy that the term *ṣabr* refers specifically. The point will come out most clearly in the examples that I am going to give.

Be thou patient (*iṣbir*) whatever they [i.e. the *kāfirs*] say, and celebrate the praise of thy Lord before the rising of the sun and before the setting; in the night, too, do thou celebrate the praise of thy Lord. (L, 38)

Wait patiently (*iṣbir*) for the judgment of thy Lord, and obey not any of them, sinful (*āthim*, for this word, see below, Chap. XIII, X, 2) or *kāfir*. Remember the name of thy Lord in the morning and in the evening, and in the night, too. Bow down before Him and celebrate His praise through the long night.

(LXXVI, 24-25; cf. also LII, 48-49, LXVIII, 48)

Keep thyself patient (*iṣbir nafsaka*: here the verb *ṣabara* is used transitively) in company with those who call upon their Lord at morn and evening, desiring His countenance. Let not thine eyes be turned away from them, desiring the pomp of the life of this world. (XVIII, 27)

O you who believe, seek [God's] help in patience (*ṣabr*) and prayer. Verily, God is with the patient (*ṣābirīna*, part. pl.). ..... We may try you with something of fear, hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give thou [Muhammad] glad tidings to

the patient (*ṣābirīna*), who say, whenever there befalls them a misfortune, 'Verily, we belong to God. Verily, unto Him do we return.'  
(II, 150-151)

## VII DIVINE GUIDANCE

Another characteristic name for belief in God used in the Koran most frequently is *ihidā* (from the verb *ihidā*[y]) with the literal meaning of 'being rightly guided' or 'acceptance of guidance'. This is but a corollary of the basic fact that in Islamic religion God's revelations are regarded as essentially a merciful Guidance (*hudā*[y]) for those who are apt to believe. Indeed, even the casual reader of the Koran would not fail to notice that through the whole of it there runs the fundamental thought that 'God guides whom He will' with its negative counterpart: 'God leads astray whom He will', or — which would, logically, collide with the preceding — that God is absolutely fair in giving guidance graciously to all men, but some people accept it while others reject it of their own free will. In either case, the revealed 'signs' are divine Guidance.

If there comes unto you guidance (*hudā*[y]) from Me, then whoso follows My guidance shall never go astray nor fall into misery. But whoso turns away from My remembrance (*dhikr*), His shall be a strait life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection.  
(XX, 121-124)

It will be interesting to note that in the latter half of this passage the word *hudā*[y] 'Guidance' is replaced by *dhikr* 'Remembrance', which is, as we have often seen, just one of the usual words denoting divine revelation in the sense of what serves to recall God to one's memory. In the following passage a revealed Book as a whole is considered a guidance.

Verily, We have brought to them a Scripture which we have expounded, based on [true] knowledge, a guidance (*hudā*[y]) and a mercy for a people that believe.  
(VII, 50)

So, viewed from the human standpoint, 'belief' is neither more nor less than 'accepting the guidance' to choose the right path, while *kufr* means 'turning away from the guidance' so as to go astray from the right path. Here is an example in which human act of 'belief' appears explicitly connected with the idea of divine guidance:

They were young men who believed (*āmanū*) in their Lord, and

We increased them in guidance (*hudā*[y]). (XVIII, 12)

Most evidently, the word 'guidance' here might very well be replaced by 'belief' without any essential change in the general meaning of the sentence. In the next quotation, likewise, 'belief' with all its characteristic features is semantically equalized with the state of 'those who are guided.'

It is not for the idol-worshippers (*mushrikīna* 'those who associate') to frequent the temples of God, witnessing as they do *kufr* against themselves. .... Only he is allowed to frequent the temples of God who believes (*āmana*) in God the Last Day, and performs the prayer, and gives the alms, and fears (*yakhsha*) none but God—such men may possibly be of the guided (*muhtadīna* part. pl.).  
(IX, 17, 18)

He who is 'guided' takes, of course, the right way. This phase of the matter is usually denoted by another root *R-SH-D*. The root appears in the Koran under several forms—verbal: *rashada*, nominal: *rashad*, *rushd*, *rashād*, *rashīd*. The first of the quotations that follow brings out most explicitly the intimate semantic relationship between 'guidance' and the 'right direction'.

We have heard a marvellous Koran that guides (*yahdī*) to the right way (*rushd*).  
(LXXII, 1-2)

When, it is related in Surah XL, a certain believer among Pharaoh's folk admonished his brethren against doing wrong to the people of Moses, and said, among other things, that 'God will never guide (*yahdī*) him who is *musrif* (see Chap. X, [V]), and a big liar (*kadhhab*)'. (v. 29), Pharaoh, offended at this, uttered the following words:

I only let you see what I see! And I only guide (*ahdī*) you in the way of right direction (*rashād*)!  
(XL, 30)

In the following two passages, *rushd* is contextually identified with *imān* and *islām* respectively.

There should be no compulsion in religion. The right way (*rushd*) has become distinct from error (*ghayy*): whoso disbelieves (*yakfur*) in idols and believes (*yu'min*) in God, has got hold of the firm handle which will never break.  
(II, 257)

Some there are among us who have surrendered (*muslimuūa*) and some there are who are unjust (*qāsiṭūna*). Those who have surrendered (*aslama*), they have chosen the right way (*rashad*).

(LXXII, 14-15)

Now if 'belief' is thus to be understood as *ihṭidā*, i.e. 'being guided in the right way', *kufr* would obviously be 'straying from the right track'. The most usual verb in the Koran for this sense is *ḡalla* (nom. *ḡalālah* or *ḡalāl*). We find this opposition between *ihṭadā*[y] and *ḡalla* expressed everywhere in the Koran in the most emphatic way. Out of a huge number of examples showing the use of *ḡalla* and *ḡalālah*, I give here a few typical ones.

(1) *ḡalla*  $\longleftrightarrow$  *ihṭadā*[y]:

Whoso is guided (or 'accepts guidance' *ihṭadā*[y]), is guided only to his own benefit, and whoso strays (*ḡalla*), strays only to his own loss. Nobody shall bear the burden of another on top of his own burden.

(XVII, 16)

Verily, thy Lord knows best who goes astray (*yaḡillu*) from His way, and He knows best the rightly guided (*muḥṭadīna*). (VI, 117)

(2) *ḡalālah*  $\longleftrightarrow$  *hudā*[y]:

Those are they who have purchased *ḡalālah* 'straying' at the price of *hudā*[y] 'guidance', and chastisement at the price of pardon.

(II, 170)

It is noteworthy that here 'straying' is paired with 'chastisement' *adhāb*, and 'guidance' with 'pardon' *maghfirah*. This alone will be enough to show that 'straying' is another name for *kufr*. In the next example, 'straying' and chastisement appear in combination:

Nay, but those who believe not in the Hereafter are in *adhāb* and far *ḡalāl*.

(XXXIV, 8)

(3) *ḡalāl* = the state before revelation:

The stage in which man lives in complete ignorance of divine revelation is sometimes designated in the Koran by the word in question, the stage, that is, that precedes all revelational activity on the part of God, and where, therefore, the problem of *kufr* in the strict sense of the word cannot properly arise yet.

Verily, God showed mercy on the believers when He sent amongst

them an Apostle of their own, to recite unto them His signs and to purify (*yuzakkī*, see above, p. 189) them, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom, although they were before that in manifest *ḡalāl*.

(III, 158)

It is interesting to notice in this connection that the following verse suggests that the cattle are naturally in the state of *ḡalāl*. But the kāfirs, it declares, are 'further astray' from the right path:

Dost thou (Muhammad) think that most of them hear or understand? They are but like the cattle. Nay, they are further astray (*aḡallu*) from the way.

(XXV, 46)

(4) *kufr* = *ḡalāl*:

If, as we have just seen, the state *before* revelation is to be classified in the category of *ḡalāl*, still more must this be true of the state of those who reject revelation knowingly. The Koran furnishes plenty of examples of this.

Verily those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) and far from the way of God, they have strayed (*ḡallū*) far astray (*ḡalālan ba'īdan*). (IV, 165)

The likeness of those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) in their Lord — their deeds are like ashes whereon the fierce wind blows on a day of tempest. They have no control at all over that which they have earned. That is indeed the far *ḡalāl*.

(XIV, 21)

It should be remarked that this equivalence, *kufr*=*ḡalāl*, obtains only from the standpoint of the believers. Viewed from the standpoint of the kāfirs themselves, it is of course the position of the believers that is *ḡalāl*. Whenever a warner comes to them, the kāfirs call him a liar and say:

God has sent down naught. You [i.e. the believers] are but in great *ḡalāl*.

(LXVII, 9)

On this, Muhammad is urged to retort, saying:

He is the Merciful. In Him we believe and in Him we put our trust. You will soon know who it is that is in manifest *ḡalāl*.

(LXVII, 29)

The same is true of the following passage.



We sent Noah unto his people, and he said, 'O my people, worship God! You have no other God than He. Verily, I fear for you the chastisement of an awful day.' The chiefs of his people said, 'Verily, we see thee in manifest *ḡalāl*.' He said, 'O my people, there is no *ḡalālah* in me, but I am an Apostle from the Lord of all beings.' (VII, 57-59)

(5) *shirk* = *ḡalāl*:

Since *shirk* 'associating', i.e. polytheism, is nothing but one of the most typical aspects of *kufṛ*, it is hardly surprising that it should be counted as a case of *ḡalāl*. A few examples would suffice.

He [a idol-worshipper] calls, beside God, upon that which neither hurts him nor profits him [i.e. idols that are completely powerless]. That is indeed the far *ḡalāl*. (XXII, 12)

When Abraham said to his father Azar, 'Takest thou idols for gods? Verily, I see thee and thy people in manifest *ḡalāl*.' (VI, 74)

Shall I take, beside Him, gods who, if the Merciful [God] should wish me any calamity, will never be able to intercede effectively for me, and who will never deliver me? Then surely I should be in manifest *ḡalāl*. (XXXVI, 21-23)

(6) Other marks of *kufṛ*:

[a] *takdhīb*:—

Then you who are erring (*ḡāllūna*, part. pl.), who cry lies [to the Day of Judgment], you shall eat of a tree called *Zaqqūm* [the infernal tree]. (LVI, 51-52)

We sent among every nation an Apostle, 'Worship you God, and shun idols!' Some of them God guided; but some of them there were who were predisposed to *ḡalālah*. Travel in the land and sea how was the fate of those who cried lies (*mukadhdhibūna*). (XVI, 38)

[b] one whose heart is hardened:—

Woe to those whose hearts are hard against the remembrance of God! Those are in *ḡalāl* manifest. (XXXIX, 23)

[c] *ḡālim*:—

Woe to those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) for the assembly of an awful day! ..... The wrong-doers (*ḡālimūna*) are today in manifest *ḡalāl*. (XIX, 39; cf. XXXI, 10)

[d] 'doubt' concerning the Truth:—

Those who believe are in fear (*mushfiqūna*) of it [i.e. the Last Hour], being well aware that it is the Truth. Ay, indeed, those who are in doubt (*yumārūna*) concerning the Hour are in far *ḡalāl*. (XLII, 17)

[e] one who despairs of Lord's mercy:—

Who would despair of the mercy of his Lord save those who are erring (*ḡāllūna*)? (XV, 56)

(7) 'Secular' use of the word *ḡalāl*:

As I pointed out earlier, examples of the non-religious use of any ethical term, if such are obtainable at all, are very important for the purpose of the semantic analysis of that word. The Chapter of Joseph furnishes us with two such instances in this case. One refers to the excessive and 'partial' love Jacob shows to Joseph in preference to all the other sons. The point of view here is, needless to say, that of Joseph's brothers.

They [Joseph's brothers] said, 'Verily, Joseph and his brother [the youngest one, Benjamin] are dearer to our father than we, though we are so many. Verily, our father is in manifest *ḡalāl*.' (XII, 8)

The other refers to the aberrant passion for young Joseph, which he has inflamed in the heart of the wife of the Egyptian Governor.

Some women in the city said, 'The wife of the Governor desires to entice his page to lie with her. He has smitten her heart with love. Verily, we see her in manifest *ḡalāl*.' (XII, 30)

It will be clear that in both cases the term *ḡalāl* implies that the action in question is something which is felt to violate the law of humanity. Here, too, the meaning is that of 'going astray from the right path'.

(8) *hawā*[y] as the immediate cause of *ḡalāl*

The Koran mentions *hawā*[y] as the principal and most immediate cause of *ḡalāl*. He who follows his *hawā*[y] in matters that concern religious faith is sure to stray

from the right path. And those who follow him who follows his *hawā[y]* will inevitably be misled far from God's way.

Say, 'I am forbidden to worship those [idols] you call upon beside God.' Say, 'I will not follow your *ahwā'* (pl. of *hawā[y]*), for then I would go astray (*ḍalaltu*) and would not be of the guided (*muhtanīna*). (VI, 55)

Who is further astray (*aḍallu*, comparative) than he who follows his own *hawā[y]* without guidance from God? Verily God guides not *ḡālīm* people. (XXVIII, 50)

Follow not the *ahwā'* of people who went astray (*ḍallū*) of old and led astray (*aḍallū*) many, and [now] have gone astray (*ḍallū*) from the level road. (V, 81)

The word *hawā[y]* may be said to mean, roughly, the natural inclination of the human soul, born of lusts and animal appetites. From the standpoint of the revealed religion, this means invariably an evil inclination which is liable to mislead man from the right way. Thus in the Koran *hawā[y]* forms the opposite of '*ilm* 'knowledge', i.e. the revealed knowledge of the Truth. Both *hawā[y]* and '*ilm* are, in this way, important value-words in the Koranic vocabulary.

If thou [Muhammad] shouldst follow their *ahwā'* after the knowledge ('*ilm*) that has come to thee, then surely thou wilt be of the wrong-doers (*ḡālimīna*). (II, 140)

Nay, but those who do wrong (*ḡalamū*) follow their own *ahwā'* in place of knowledge ('*ilm*). Who shall guide (*yahdī*) him whom God has led astray (*aḍalla*)? They have no helpers. (XXX, 28)

The Jews will not be satisfied with thee [Muhammad], nor yet the Christians, until thou followest their creed. Say, 'God's guidance (*hudā[y]*) is the guidance'. If thou followest their *ahwā'* after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have then against God no protector nor helper. (II, 114)

It will be evident from the foregoing that the act of following one's own *hawā[y]* as opposed to 'knowledge' is, in ultimate analysis, nothing other than forming wild conjectures concerning God and His revelation. So we see sometimes *hawā[y]* being replaced by some such expressions.

If thou obeyest most people on earth they would lead thee astray (*yudīllu*) from God's way, for they follow naught but mere conjecture (*ḡann*); they speak only by opinion (*yakhrūṣūna*). (VI, 116)

It goes without saying that 'knowledge' '*ilm*, in its turn, may be replaced by 'truth' *ḡaqq*, for they are but two different aspects of one and the same thing: divine revelation (cf. p. 89).

Judge thou between them in accordance with what God has sent down, and follow not their *ahwā'* to turn away from the Truth (*ḡaqq*) that has come to thee. (V, 52)

It is interesting to note that the attitude of those who follow their own *hawā[y]* in place of divine guidance is sometimes designated in the Koran by a very significant expression: 'taking one's own *hawā[y]* for one's God.'

Hast thou seen him who has taken his *hawā[y]* for his God, and God has led him astray (*aḍalla*) knowingly, and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart, and has placed a covering upon his eyesight? Who shall, then, guide him after God? (XLV, 22; cf. XXV, 45)

*Shahwah* is a word meaning 'desire', 'appetite', or 'lust'; it may, in certain contexts, behave as a synonym of *hawā[y]* and replace it without causing any noticeable change in meaning.

God wishes to turn towards you, but those who follow their *shahawāt* (pl. of *shahwah*) wish that you should swerve away [from the Truth] with a mighty swerving. (IV, 32)

There succeeded them [i.e. the great Prophets such as Abraham, Moses, Ishmael, etc.] a generation who abandoned the prayer and followed the *shahawāt*. (XIX, 60)

#### (9) Some synonyms of *ḍalāl*

[a] *ghawiya*, or *ghawā[y]* — meaning 'to go astray from the right course'. In the following passage, the *ghāwī*, which is the participial form of this verb — meaning, therefore, 'one who goes astray' — is opposed, first of all, to *muttaqī* which, as we know, means 'one who fears' or 'godfearing', and then, after a few verses, it is definitely shown that it is perfectly synonymous with *ḍalāl*.

And Paradise shall be brought nigh unto the *muttaqīna* (pl.), while Hell shall be brought forward for the *ghāwīna* (pl.)..... They [the kāfirs in the Fire] shall say, while quarrelling therein, 'By God, we were surely in manifest *ḍalāl* when we made you [i.e. idols] equal with the Lord of all beings. The truth is that the sinners (*mujrimūna*) led us astray (*aḍalla*). (XXVI, 90-91, 96-99)

The next example is very significant in that it explains the meaning of *ghāwī* in terms of *hawā* [y].

..... We brought to him Our signs, but he cast them off, and Satan overtook him, and thus he became of the *ghāwīna*. Had We willed, We could have raised him thereby, but he stuck to the earth and followed his *hawā* [y]. (VII, 174-175)

That the verb *ghawā* [y] is a synonym of *ḍalla* in its religious sense may be proved by another fact: namely, that it is sometimes used to denote the reverse of *ihtidā* 'being guided'.

Adam disobeyed ('aṣā [y]) his Lord [in reference to the fact that he ate of the Tree of Eternity in the Garden], and so he went astray (*ghawā* [y]). Afterwards, however, his Lord chose him, turned again towards him, and guided (*hadā* [y]) him.

(XX, 119-120)

[b] *zāgha* (nom. *zaigh*)—meaning to swerve aside, or deviate from the right course. Here is a typical example of its use:

He it is who has sent down upon thee the Scripture, of which some verses are clear....., and others ambiguous. As for those in whose hearts is *zaigh* ['swerving inclination', so to speak], they cling to the ambiguous part, seeking to cause dissension. ....

Yet those who are firmly rooted in the knowledge (*rāsikhūna fī al-ilm*) say, 'We believe in it. All is from our Lord. .... Our Lord, cause not our hearts to swerve (*tuzigh*, causative form of *zaigh*) after that thou hast guided (*hadaita*) us.' (III, 5-6)

[c] '*amiha*, or '*amaha*—meaning roughly 'to wander astray blindly, being utterly perplexed as to which way to go.' The verb, as is clear, is particularly fit for describing the state of the kāfirs going to and fro in this world, without ever finding out the right direction.

Verily, as for those who believe not in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds look fair unto them so that they wander astray (*ya'mahūna*). (XXVII, 4)

Very similar to *ḍalāl* in the close relationship it bears to divine Guidance is *ghaflah* which literally means 'heedlessness' or 'carelessness'. While *ḍalāl*, as we know, consists in swerving from the path of Guidance, *ghaflah* means to remain utterly heedless of it. It is highly interesting to note that, just as *ḍalāl*, as we have seen above, can denote the state before Revelation, so *ghaflah*, too, can be used in reference to the pre-revelational conditions of man. In Surah XXV, v. 46 which I quoted on page 197 we see the kāfirs compared to the cattle in regard to the state of *ḍalāl* in which they find themselves. Exactly the same is true of them in regard to the property of heedlessness which characterizes them.

Whomsoever God guides (*yahdī*), he is guided (*muhtadī*), while whomsoever He leads astray (*yudlīl*), such are the losers. We have created for Gehenna a huge number of jinn and men who, having hearts, understand not therewith. They are like the cattle. Nay, they are further astray (*aḍallu*). They are the heedless (*ghāfilūna*, part. pl.). (VIII, 177-178)

The revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful, that thou [Muhammad] mayest warn a people whose fathers were never warned, and who are, consequently, heedless. (XXXVI, 5)

It will be noteworthy that Muhammad himself is described as having been in the state of heedlessness before he began to receive divine revelations:

We narrate to thee the best of stories in that We have revealed to thee this Koran, although thou wast afore-time of the heedless. (XII, 3)

The following example brings 'heedlessness' into a close relationship with *kufr*, *zulm*, and *shirk*.

When the true promise [i.e. the chastisement of Hell] draws nigh, lo, how fixedly open they are, the eyes of the kāfirs! [They say], 'Alas for us! We were in heedlessness (*ghaflah*) of this. Nay, we were wrong-doers (*ẓālimīna*). 'Verily, you and what you used worship beside God, are all fuel for Gehenna. You are now going to enter it'. (XXI, 97-98)

Next I give two examples that would bring to light the semantic equivalence between *kufr* and *ghaflah*.

..... God guides not the *kāfir* people. They are those upon whose hearts and ears and eyes God has set a seal. Those are the heedless (*ghāfilūna*). (XVI, 109-110)

Give thou [Muhammad] warning to them of the day of grief, when the matter shall be decided [ultimately], while they are in heedlessness (*ghaflah*) and unbelieving (*lā yu'minūna*). (XIX, 40)

In the following quotation this 'heedlessness' is paired with 'following the *hawā*[y]' which, as we have just seen, is the immediate cause of *qalāl*.

Obeys not him whose heart We have made heedless (*aghfalnā*, causative form) of Our remembrance, and who follows his *hawā*[y]. (XVIII, 27)

Finally, I shall give an interesting instance of the 'secular' use of this word. The passage is found in the Chapter of Joseph, and it is put in the mouth of Jacob, who is being extremely anxious about his beloved child, Joseph, whom his brothers are going to take out to make him play in the open air.

Verily, it grieves me that you should take him out with you; I fear lest the wolf devour him [Joseph] while you are heedless (*ghāfilūna*) of him. (XII, 13)

## Chapter XIII

### GOOD AND BAD

The title of this chapter is somewhat misleading. And perhaps some words are necessary at the very outset to elucidate my standpoint.

It may have been remarked that the ethical terms hitherto dealt with in this book, are all, properly and primarily, descriptive or indicative words. If, nevertheless, they have justifiably been treated as 'value' terms, it is simply because these words invariably carry, as a matter of actual usage, a markedly valuational import; they are, in other words, descriptive of some abjective facts, and are, at the same time, evaluative through implication. Roughly the same is true of most of the words which we shall examine in this chapter.

I would like to begin by noting that there is, strictly, no fully-developed abstract conception of 'good' and 'bad' in the moral system of the Koran. True, the Koranic vocabulary contains a number of words that may be, and usually are, translated by 'good' and 'bad' — and these precisely constitute the subject-matter of the present discussion — but, with a few noticeable exceptions they are properly to be regarded rather as descriptive words, whose primary job is to indicate some concrete objective facts; if they do 'evaluate', they do so only by implication. They are 'value' words by being, first, descriptive words; they evaluate through describing. And of course, their descriptive contents are primarily of a religious nature. At the same time, however, we cannot deny the existence in the Koran of a limited number of words whose primary function is evidently evaluative rather than descriptive. To this point we shall return in our concluding chapter.

As I tried to explain in detail in Chap. VIII, morality in Islam had its origin in religion and developed exclusively in its eschatological framework. Now this eschatological framework makes the ultimate destiny of man depend on what he does in the present world, in particular reference to whether his conduct furthers or hinders the cause of Islam. Thence comes the very specific nature of 'good' and 'bad' in the Koranic outlook. Nothing shows this emphatically religious character of the conception of moral goodness in the Islam than the little word *ṣāliḥ* which is one of the commonest words for moral excellence actually used in the Koran.

#### I ṢĀLIḤ

The word *ṣāliḥ* is most commonly translated in English 'righteous'; one may as well translate it by 'good'. The real problem is to isolate the concrete descriptive content of this word.

(1) 'belief' and *ṣāliḥāt*

Let us remark, in the first place, that the strongest tie of semantic relationship binds *ṣāliḥ* and *īmān* together into, one should say, an almost inseparable unit. Just as the shadow follows the form, wherever there is *īmān* there is *ṣāliḥāt* or, 'good works', so much so that we may rightly define the former in terms of the latter, and the latter in terms of the former. In brief, the *ṣāliḥāt* are 'belief' fully expressed in outward conduct. And so it comes about that the expression: *alladhīna āmanū wa-ʿamilū al-ṣāliḥāt* 'those who believe and do *ṣāliḥ* deeds', is one of the most frequently used standing phrases in the Koran. 'Those who believe' are not believers unless they manifest their inner faith in certain types of deeds that deserve the appellation of *ṣāliḥ*.

Those who believe and do good works (*ṣāliḥāt*); such shall be the inhabitants of Paradise, to dwell therein forever. (II, 76)

What are, then, these 'good works', concretely? It is clear contextually that the 'good works' are those works of piety that have been enjoined by divine revelation upon all the believers. As a matter of fact, the verse 77 which immediately follows the passage just quoted and which is given as the Covenant of God with the Israelites, may be taken as a summary description of the concrete of *ṣāliḥāt*. It enumerates the following five elements; (1) to worship none save God, (2) to be good (i. e. kind and benevolent *iḥsān* — for this word see VI, 3) to parents, the near kinsman, orphans, and the needy, (3) to speak kindly to everyone, (4) to perform the prayer, and (5) to pay the alms.

Of the two following examples, the first emphasizes the element of pure monotheism as 'a *ṣāliḥ* deed', and the second takes up the items (4) and (5).

Say, 'I [Muhammad] am only an [ordinary] man like you. It is revealed to me that your God is One God. Whoso hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him do good (*ṣāliḥ*) work, and let him associate none else with the worship of his Lord'. (XVIII, 110)

Verily, those who believe and do *ṣāliḥāt*, performing the prayer and paying the alms, their reward is with their Lord. There shall be no fear on them, nor shall they grieve. (II, 277)

In the next quotation, the attitude of arrogance and insolence which Noah's son takes towards God's command is labeled as non-*ṣāliḥ* conduct.

He [God] said, 'O Noah, he is no longer of thy family, for this is a deed that is not *ṣāliḥ*. So ask not of Me that whereof thou hast

no knowledge [i. e. do not ask Me to deliver him from the Deluge]. (XI, 48)

(2) '*ṣāliḥ* man'

The word *ṣāliḥ* does not always qualify human conduct; sometimes we find it also applied to men of a certain type. A brief examination of some of the examples falling under this head will prove of some help to us in analyzing the meaning content of this term. Here is, to begin with, a passage which we may consider almost a verbal definition of '*ṣāliḥ* man':

Some of the people of the Scripture are a nation upright (*qā'imah*), who keep reciting God's signs throughout the night, falling prostrate [before God]. They believe in God and the Last Day, enjoin what is good (*mā'rūf*), for this and the following two terms in brackets, see later) and forbid what is bad (*munkar*), and vie one with the other in good works (*khairāt*). These are of the *ṣāliḥīna* (pl.). (III, 109-110)

The following passage bears witness to the fact that the act of giving the alms is regarded as at least one of the characteristic marks of a *ṣāliḥ* man.

Spend of what We have provided you before death comes unto any one of you and makes him say, 'My Lord, if only thou wouldst allow me the grace of a little while, so that I might give alms and become one of the *ṣāliḥīna*'. (LXIII, 10)

It is noteworthy that Jesus Christ is counted among the *ṣāliḥīna* ('He shall speak to people in the cradle, and grown up, he shall be of the *ṣāliḥīna*'. Surah III, 41). A few verses before this in the same Surah we find John the Baptist also called a 'Prophet among the *ṣāliḥīna* (v. 34)'.  
We may also note that the 'believers' are sometimes called very characteristically the '*ṣāliḥ* slaves' of God.

Verily, We have written in the Psalms, after the remembrance, 'The earth shall my *ṣāliḥ* slaves inherit.' (XXI, 108)

[Solomon] said, 'My Lord, urge me to be thankful (*ashkura*) for Thy favor wherewith Thou hast favored me and my parents, and to do good work (*ṣāliḥ*) that shall be pleasing unto Thee; do Thou admit me by Thy mercy in the number of Thy *ṣāliḥ* slaves'.

(XXVII, 19)



(3) *aṣḥaḥa*

This is the so-called fourth, i. e. causative, verb-form from the same root and means to do something *ṣāliḥ* or — with a special reference to its previous corrupt state — to restore something to the original *ṣāliḥ* state. In either case, what is implied by the root itself would seem to remain exactly the same as that meant by the adjective *ṣāliḥ* which I have just discussed.

Those who hold fast to the Scripture and perform the prayer — verily, We will not bring to naught the wage of those who do right (*muṣliḥīna*, part. pl. of *aṣḥaḥa*). (VII, 169)

A man, whom Moses, angry, is about to assault, cries out:

'O Moses, wouldst thou kill me, thou who didst kill a man even yesterday? Thou desirest to be a tyrant in the land. Thou desirest not to be of those who do right (*muṣliḥīna*). (XXVIII, 18)

Contextually it is plain that the *muṣliḥ* here is roughly the opposite of the *muḥrim* 'sinner' which appears in the text a little earlier (v. 16).

The next example presents *aṣḥaḥa* in close connection with the act of 'repentance'.

How shall God guide a people who become disbelievers after having once become believers.....? God guides not the wrong-doers (*ṣālimīna*). ..... But those who repent after that and do right (*aṣḥaḥū*); verily God is Forgiving, Merciful. (III, 73)

(4) Antonyms of *ṣāliḥ* and *aṣḥaḥa*

As a rule, the verb *aṣḥaḥa* appears in the Koran opposed formally to *afsada* which, alone, will tell much about the general meaning of this latter word. The verb *afsada*, which, by the way, is also causative in form, is usually translated more or less rightly 'to corrupt' or 'to spoil'. The essential point to note about this word is that it is the antonym of *aṣḥaḥa*. More details about the meaning of *afsada* will be given in the next section. Here I am merely concerned to give a few typical examples showing the fundamental opposition between the two verbs.

They will question thee [Muhammad] concerning the orphans. Say, 'The best thing is to do good (*iṣlāḥ*, inf.) to them. If you choose to intermix with them, [remember that] they are your brothers. God knows the evil-doer (*muḥsid*, part. of *afsada*) from the well-doer (*muṣliḥ*, part. of *aṣḥaḥa*).' (II, 218-219)

Moses who about to leave his people for forty nights to go into the sacred mountain to meet his Lord there, says to his brother Awron:

'Take thou my place. Do right (*aṣliḥ*, imper.) and follow not the way of those who do evil (*muḥsidīna*).' (VII, 138)

The next example relates to certain persons who represent the worst of all *kāfirs*, attempting to kill their Prophet and his family.

There were in that city nine men who used to make mischief (*yufsidūna*, from *afsada*) in the land and never did good (*yusliḥūna*). (XXVII, 49)

As for *ṣāliḥ* itself, its opposite is not any word coming from the root *FSD* (such as *afsada*, *muḥsid*, *fasād*, etc.); but it is furnished by an entirely different root, *SW*. This latter root itself will be analyzed later on. Here it must suffice to give some quotations in which *ṣāliḥ* is clearly opposed to some of the derivatives of this root. In the first example, we see the characteristic cliché of which I spoke above, 'those who believe and do *ṣāliḥāt*' opposed to 'these who commit *sayyi'āt*'. It is clear that if we are to translate *ṣāliḥāt* 'good deeds', we should translate *sayyi'āt* 'evil deeds'.

Do those who commit *sayyi'āt* think that we shall treat them in the same way as these who believe and do *ṣāliḥāt*, equal in life and death? How ill they judge. (XLV, 20)

In the next passage, *ṣāliḥ* is opposed to *sayyi'ah* (in the singular).

Whoso does an evil deed (*sayyi'ah*) shall be repaid exactly the like thereof, but whoso does a good [deed] (*ṣāliḥ*), whether man or woman, being a believer — such shall enter Paradise and shall be supplied with food without reckoning. (XL, 43)

*Sayyi'ah* is a noun formed from the adjective *sayyi'*. Here is an example of the use of this adjective itself, qualifying the noun 'amal' 'action' or 'deed', which is understood. It is, be it noted, used in contradistinction to 'amal *ṣāliḥ*'.

Some of the Bedouin around you are 'hypocrites', ..... and others have confessed their sins (*dhunūb*, for this word, see later) [i. e. they confessed that they had stayed behind from the Apostle in one of his raids on the *kāfirs*]: they have mixed a good action

('amal *ṣāliḥ*) with another evil (*sayyi'*) [action]. It may be that God will forgive them. (IX, 103)

*Sū'* is another noun derived from the same root; this, too, may be used in opposition to *ṣāliḥ*, with exactly the same meaning as *sayyi'ah*. The following example must be compared with that taken from Surah XL (given above). One will note that the general context is the same in both cases.

Whoso does evil (*su'*) shall be recompensed for it, and will not find for him beside God, a friend or a helper. Whoso does any of the *ṣāliḥāt*, Whether man or woman, being a believer — such shall enter Paradise, and they shall not be wronged even a small spot on a date-stone. (IV, 122–123)

For all this, the proper antithesis of *su'* or *sayyi'* is not *ṣāliḥ* but another word, *ḥasan*. So the meaning structure of the root *SW'* will come up again for consideration at a later stage, when we shall deal with the root *ḤSN*.

## II BIRR

Very similar to *ṣāliḥ* in meaning — though not in form — is the word *birr*, which is perhaps among the vaguest and most elusive of the Koranic moral terms. The very fact that it has been translated in English by such disparate terms as 'piety', 'righteousness', 'kindness' etc. would seem to bear ample witness to the essential wooliness of the image it evokes in the mind.

Now I think that an important clue to the basic semantic structure of this word may be gained if we compare it with *ṣāliḥ* which we have just examined. As we have seen, in the semantic constitution of *ṢLḤ* a very prominent place is given to factors relating to justice and love in human relations, so much so that — to take two representative elements — the act of rendering religious service to God and that of feeding the poor are made to stand there almost on the same footing. Nor, if we reflect, should this surprise us, for the Koran as a whole gives an outstanding emphasis to justice and love in social life. Piety, in other words, cannot be piety unless it manifests itself in various actions motivated by the will to practice justice and love towards others.

Now the word *birr* seems to lend further confirmation to this view. An extremely important passage from Surah II, which I quoted in Chap. IV, furnishes a contextual definition of this word, at least as it was understood by Muhammad himself. 'The *birr* does not consist in your turning your faces towards the East or the West, but [true] *birr* is this, that one believes in God, and the Last Day, and

the angels, and the Scripture, and the prophets; that one gives one's own wealth, howsoever cherished it may be, to kinsfolk, orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, and beggars, and also for the sake of slaves; that one performs the ritual prayer, pays the alms. And those who keep their covenant when they have once covenanted and are patient in distress and hardship. These are they who are sincere; these are they who are godfearing.' (II, v. 172)

A glance at the elements here enumerated as constituting true *birr* would make us understand at once that there is practically nothing to distinguish it from *ṣāliḥāt*, or true *imān*. We see at the same time why this term has been so variously translated in English. It may very well be rendered as 'piety'; it may no less justifiably be rendered as 'righteousness' or 'kindness'. But any of these translations taken alone, cannot passibly do justice to the original word which includes all these and perhaps still others in its complex meaning.

Other examples culled from the Koran serve only to bring out this or that aspect of this complex meaning of *birr*.

*birr*=*taqwā* [y] :

In the last sentence of the passage just cited, we see *birr* brought into the most explicit connection with 'fear' (*taqwā* [y]). For it is emphatically stated there that those who fulfil all the duties, social as well as religious, to be included under the name of *birr* — these alone are worthy to be called 'sincere, or true, believers' (*alladhina ṣadaqū*) and truly 'godfearing' (*muttaqūna*).

In a similar way the passage declares that true *birr* does not consist in the keeping of the meaningless taboos but in 'fearing' God.

It is not *birr* that you should enter your houses from the backs of them. But *birr* is to fear [God]. So enter your houses by the doors and fear God. (II, 185; see also LVIII, 10)

*birr*=almsgiving :

You attain not to *birr* until you expend of what you love. And whatever you expend, God is aware of it. (III, 76)

Probably *birr* in the next quotation also refers to almsgiving :

Will you enjoin *birr* upon others while you yourselves forget? And yet you always read the Scripture! Have you no sense? (II, 41)

*birr*=piety to parents (= *iḥsān*) :

He [John, son of Zachariah] was godfearing [*taqiyy*, adj.] and pious

[*barr*, adj. from the same root as *birr*] to his parents.

(XIX, 13-14)

He [God] has enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I live, and *birr* towards my mother. He has not made me a miserable, insolent fellow.

(XIX, 32-33)

*birr* = *qisf* (equity and justice in conduct)

As to those who have not fought you on account of religion nor driven you out from your homes, God forbids you not that you should show *birr* (*tabarrū*, verb) to them and act equitably (*tuqsiṭū*, verb) towards them. Verily, God loves those who act equitably (*muqsiṭīna*, part, pl.).

(LX, 8)

*qisf*: In the passage which I have just quoted, we see *qisf* behaving almost synonymously with *birr*. But while *birr*, as we saw, is a comprehensive name for all actions motivated by love and righteousness, and stimulated by the religious experience of 'fear', *qisf* has a much more limited application, being used, chiefly as a forensic term, for justice, or impartiality in dealings with others. As such, the word is most often applied to the verdict in a trial.

If they [i. e. the Jews hostile to Islam] come to thee [Muhammad], judge thou between them, or simply turn away from them. .... But in case thou judgest, then judge between them with justice (*qisf*). Verily, God loves those who practise justice (*muqsiṭīna*, part. pl.)

(V, 46)

Every nation has its own Apostle. So when their Apostle comes [on the Day of Judgment] it will be judged between them with justice (*qisf*), and they will not be wronged (*yuḡlamūna*) (XXI, 48)

It should be noticed that 'being judged with *qisf*' is here made equivalent to 'not suffering any wrong (*ḡulm*)'. In other words, *qisf* in such contexts is clearly opposed to *ḡulm*, a fact which may greatly aid us in better understanding the meaning of both *qisf* and *ḡulm*.

As we might expect, the final yardstick of justice in such cases is, according to the Koranic view, furnished by God's will. Revelation, in short, is the ultimate basis of *qisf*. The point comes out with utmost clarity in verses like the following: 'Whoso judges not by what God has revealed—these are the *kāfirs*. .... Whoso judges not by what God has revealed—these are the wrong-doers (*ḡālimūna*) [Note again the concept of *ḡulm* appearing as the reverse of *qisf*]' (V, 48-49)

In this sense, *qisf* is often replaced by *ḥaqq* which, as we saw earlier, means 'truth' or 'Truth (=Revelation)'. A comparison of the contexts in which *qisf* and *ḥaqq* appear makes it evident that the word *ḥaqq* in this use is perfectly synonymous with *qisf*.

O David, verily, We have set thee as [Our] vicegerent in the earth. So judge between men with *ḥaqq*, and follow not thy fancy (*hawā[y]*), for it will lead thee astray from the path of God.

(XXXVIII, 25)

[On the Day of Judgment] it shall be judged between them with *ḥaqq*, and they shall not be wronged (*yuḡlamūna*). Every soul shall be paid for what it has done.

(XXXIX, 67-70)

God judges with *ḥaqq*, while those [idols] they call on beside Him judge not by any means.

(XL, 21)

Now to hark back to the discussion of the word *qisf* itself which has been interrupted. As I suggested above, *qisf* may refer to various cases involving equity or justice. Thus, to take a typical instance, he who takes the witness stand should act with perfect impartiality and not allow himself to be swayed by his own personal likes and dislikes.

O believers, be upright before God as witnesses with *qisf*. Let not your ill-will towards a people tempt you into the sin of not acting equitably (*ta'dilū*, for this word see the next section). Act equitably (*i'dilū*); that is nearer to 'fear' (*taqwā[y]*). Fear God, for God is aware of what you do.

(V, 11)

The concrete meaning of the phrase 'with *qisf*' will be clear from what follows it. Essentially the same is true of the next example.

O believers, be upright before God as witnesses with *qisf*, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kinsmen, whether [the accused] be rich or poor.

(IV, 134)

The next passage concerns the legal way of dealing on credit:

O believers, when you deal on credit one with another for a definite term, write it down, and let a writer write it between you with '*adl* [= *qisf*]. .... Be not averse to writing it down, be [the

amount] small or great, with its date of payment. That is more equitable (*aqsat*, comp.) in God's sight. (II, 282)

The word is also used in reference to the standards and obligations in commerce. In the Koran there are frequent exhortations to 'give full measure and full weight, in justice.' An example may suffice:

O my people, give full measure and full weight with *qist*, and do not defraud men of their things. (XI, 86)

I shall remark in passing that there exists in Arabic another word which is almost a 'technical' term for the occurrence of non-*qist* in the specific field of measure and weight: *ṭaffafa* (root *ṬF*), which conveys precisely the meaning of 'giving short measure or weight.' This, too, appears in the Koran in a very important passage. The context itself furnishes, as it were, a verbal definition of the word:

Woe unto the defrauders (*muṭaffifīna*, part. pl.) who, when they measure against others, take full measure, but, when they measure or weigh for others, give short measure. (LXXXIII, 1-3)

It is interesting to observe that this concept of justice in measure is extended to the heavenly Balance—the 'just' Balance, as it is called—which is to be employed on the Day of Judgment.

We shall set up the Balance of *qist* for the Day of Resurrection, so that no soul shall be wronged in aught. Even if it be of the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We shall bring it out, for We are absolute reckoners. (XXI, 48)

'*adl*': Incidentally mention has been made of the word '*adl*' as a synonym of *qist*. Here I shall give two further examples which will confirm the close relationship between the two words. The first passage contains *qist* in its first half, while in the second half approximately the same idea is expressed by '*adl*'.

In case you fear that you cannot act justly (*tuqsiṭū*, verb) towards the orphans [in your charge], marry of the women, who seem good to you two, three, or four. But if you fear you cannot act equitably (*ta'dilū*) [towards so many wives], then only one, or what your right hands possess [i. e. slave-girl]. Thus it is more likely that you will not be partial. (IV, 3)

If two parties of the believers combat one with another, try to make peace between them. Then, if one of the parties acts wrongfully out of insolence (*baghat*, from *baghā*[y], for this word see above Chap IX), fight the party that acts wrongfully until it returns to God's commandment. If it returns, make peace between them with '*adl*', and act equitably (*aqsiṭū*, from *qist*). Verily, God loves those who act equitably (*muqsiṭīna*, part. pl.). (XLIX, 9)

The next example is of particular significance in that it brings to light the focal point of the meaning of '*adl*' by contrasting it with *mail* 'partiality', or favoritism:

You will not be able to act equitably (*ta'dilū*, verb) to [all your] wives, however eagerly you may wish [to do so]. But yet do not be altogether partial (*lā tamilū kulla al-maili*) so as to leave one as in suspense. (IV, 128)

Thus it is clear that this word has as good a right as *qist* does to be employed as a forensic term for the exercise of 'justice' in courts of law.

Verily, God commands you ..... that, when you judge between men, you judge with '*adl*'. (IV, 61)

When you speak, be just (*i'dilū*, imper.), even though [the person for or against whom you witness] be your near kinsman. (VI, 153)

O believers, when any one of you is about to die call in testimony, at the time of bequeathing, two men of equity ('*adl*') from among you. (V, 105)

### III FASĀD

In the section relating to *ṣāliḥ*, brief mention was made of the causative verb *afsada* in so far as it forms the antithesis of *aṣḥaḥa*. In this section we are concerned chiefly with the problem of bringing to light the concrete semantic content of the underlying concept of *fasād* itself. That the word *fasād* (or *afsada*) is a very comprehensive word that is capable of denoting all kinds of evil-doing is clear from an examination of its behavior in non-religious contexts. Even within the limits of the Koran, we find a few examples of such non-religious use of the word. Thus, for instance, in the Chapter of Joseph the act of stealing is called by this name.

'By God', they said, 'well you know that we came not here to do evil (*nufsidā*, from *afsada*) in the land. We are not thieves.'

(XII, 73)

This is said by Joseph's brothers who have fallen under suspicion of having stolen the king's goblet. In the following passage the reference is to the acts of atrocious violence committed by Gog and Magog everywhere in the earth:

They said, 'O Two-Horned [i.e. Alexander the Great], look, Gog and Magog are doing evil (*mufsidūna*, part. of *afsada*) in the earth. Wilt thou set up a rampart between us and them, if we pay thee tribute?' (XVIII, 93)

In another passage, which, by the way, should be regarded as a 'religious' context from the point of view of the Koran, the same word is used to mean the evil ways to which people of Sodom were notoriously given.

Lot said to his people, 'Verily, you commit an abomination (*fāḥishah*, for this word, see later) such as none in all the world ever committed before you. What, do you approach men, and cut the way [robbing wayfarers], and commit in your assembly things disapproved (*munkar*, for this word, see later)?'

But the only answer of his people was, 'Bring us God's chastisement, if what thou speakest is true!' He said, 'My Lord, help me against this people who do evil (*mufsidūna*). (XXIX, 27-29)

The word is also applied to the conduct of Pharaoh, violently oppressing the Israelites without any justifiable reason:

Verily, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and divided the people thereof into sects; he oppressed one party of them [i.e. the Israelites], slaughtering their sons and sparing their women. Verily, he did evil [lit. he was one of the *mufsidūna*]. (XXVIII, 3)

In another place, the word is applied to the Egyptian sorcerers in the service of the Court. The reference is to the well-known scene of the magic tournament in the presence of Pharaoh:

Moses said, 'That which you have shown is sorcery. God will surely bring it to naught, for God will never set right (*yusliḥu*, from *aṣlahā*) the work of those who do evil (*mufsidūna*). (X, 81)

In properly religious contexts, however, the word very often, if not invariably, has the restricted meaning of *kufr*. Here I give a few typical examples, of which the first applies the word *mufsid* to the 'disbelievers' in particular reference to their *takdhīb* (see p. 136). This is clear from the general context from which the passage has been taken.

Of them some believe therein [i.e. in the Koran], and some believe not therein. But thy Lord knows well who are the evil-doers (*mufsidūna*). (X, 41)

Those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) and bar from the way of God — We shall inflict upon them punishment after punishment, for that they were doing evil (*yufsidūna*). (XVI, 90)

There is no god but God. .... But if they turn away, verily God knows those who do evil (*mufsidūna*). (III, 56)

It is interesting to note that in a passage the same word is applied to the monotheists from the standpoint of the *kāfirs*. Here the spread of the monotheistic movement causing irreparable damage to the traditional idolatrous customs is regarded as 'working corruption in the land'.

The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said, 'Wilt thou [Pharaoh] leave Moses and his people to do evil (*yufsidū*) in the land and abandon thee and thy gods?' (VII, 124)

I shall end this section by mentioning a synonym of *afsada*. What I have in mind is the verb '*athā*' (or '*athā[y]*'). The synonymity will be evident from the following examples:

Keep in mind all the favors of God, and work not evil (*ta'thū*, from '*athā*') in the land, doing corruption (*mufsidūna*). (VII, 72)

Contextually this means: 'worship God alone, and do not behave in a *kāfir* way by disobeying the commands of your Lord.' The next example concerns the right conduct in commerce.

O my people, worship God. You have no god other than He. And give not short measure and weight. I see you are now in prosperity, but, verily, I fear for you the chastisement of the Day that will surround [you all]. O my people, fill up the measure and



balance fairly, and defraud not the people of their goods. And work not evil in the land, doing corruption.

(XI, 86; also XXVI, 181-183)

#### IV MA'RŪF AND MUNKAR

##### (I) *ma'rūf*

Among the various terms that may be regarded as constituting partial or near Arabic equivalents for the English 'good', the word that we are going to take up for consideration, *ma'rūf* occupies a special place, because it seems to represent an idea that goes back to a remote past. The concept belongs to, and is based on, the tribal type of morality that was peculiar to the Jahiliyyah. As Reuben Levy has remarked very pertinently, the use of this word — with its opposite, *munkar* — in the Koran for good (and evil), shows that Muhammad adopted the tribal moral terminology and made it an integral part of his new system of ethics. *Ma'rūf* means literally 'known', i. e. what is regarded as known and familiar, and, therefore, also socially approved. Its antithesis *munkar* means what is disapproved precisely because it is unknown and foreign. 'Tribal societies in a state of civilization parallel to that of the Arab tribes of the *Jāhiliya*, would, in the same way as they did, regard the known and familiar as the good and the strange as the evil' (*The Social Structure of Islam*, p. 194). It would be not without interest to remark in this connection that in the Muslim exegeses of later ages we see the word *ma'rūf* defined very often as 'what is acknowledged and approved by *shar'*'; that is, by the Law of Islam. (See for instance, Baiḍāwī, comm. on Surah II, v. 232)

But the word *ma'rūf*, whatever its origin, is actually used in the Koran in a rather more restricted sense than this. We might perhaps do best to examine, first of all, an example which will give us an important clue as to what Muhammad had in mind when he used this word. The passage in question is contained in the admonition which God gives especially to the wives of Muhammad.

O wives of the Prophet, you are not as ordinary women. If you [truly] fear [God], be not too tender in your speech [in talking to men other than your husband], lest he in whose heart is sickness should become lustful. But always speak *ma'rūf* words.

(XXXIII, 32)

It is clear contextually that the phrase 'words that are *ma'rūf*' here denotes the manner of speech which is really suitable to the Prophet's wife; a manner of talking, that is, which is honorable enough, dignified enough to give 'those in whose hearts is sickness' (i. e. men full of sexual and sensual desires) absolutely no chance of getting excited lustfully.

The next example throws another illuminating light on the meaning content of *ma'rūf* by contrasting it with the way of doing which is not *ma'rūf*.

When you have divorced women, and they have reached their prescribed term, then retain them with *ma'rūf*, or else release them with *ma'rūf*; but do not retain them by force (*ḡirāran*) so that you transgress. Whoso does that has done wrong to himself.

(II, 231)

'To retain the divorced women with *ma'rūf*' is here contrasted with 'to retain them by force', which suggests that 'with *ma'rūf*' must mean something like 'in the right way.' The 'right' here would, in the Jahiliyyah, mean nothing but 'traditionally known (and approved)'; with Muhammad, however, the source of rightness lies not in tradition, but in the will of God. This is clear from the fact that, in this passage, 'behaving not in the *ma'rūf* way' is declared to be a case of 'transgression', and 'doing wrong to one's own soul' — expressions that are, as we saw earlier, commonly used to describe precisely the conduct of the kāfirs.

Incidentally, the passage I have just quoted is a legal provision for the divorced wife. Now it is another characteristic feature of the word *ma'rūf* that it tends to be used most appropriately in the legislative portions of the Book, particularly where regulations concerning the moral duties in the family relation, between husband and wife, parents and children, or among near kinsfolk, are in question. The following are some of the examples from Surah II and others.

When you have divorced women and they have reached the prescribed term, prevent them not from marrying their [new] husbands, when they have agreed with each other with *ma'rūf*.

(II, 232)

The phrase 'with *ma'rūf*' in this passage would seem to be equivalent almost to 'through due formalities'. Baiḍāwī paraphrases it thus: 'in compliance with the legal provision and according to what is acknowledged by the law of humanity'.

Mothers shall suckle their children for the period of two whole years, provided they desire to complete the suckling. [During that period] the father of the child must fulfill the duty of feeding and clothing them [i. e. the mothers] with *ma'rūf*. ['honestly' 'respectably' or 'in due form', as one might say].

(II, 233)

But if you prefer to place your children under the care of a wet nurse, it is no sin (*junāh*, see later) for you, provided you pay

with *ma'rūf* what you have to give. (II, 233)

O you who believe, it is not lawful (*lā yahillu*) for you to inherit women against their will, nor to hinder them [from remarrying] so as to take back part of what you have given them, unless they commit a flagrant abomination [i. e. fornication]. Treat them with *ma'rūf*. (IV, 23)

Be grateful to Me and to thy parents. .... But in case they attempt at inducing thee to associate with Me that which thou hast no knowledge of [i. e. idols], then obey them not. But keep company with them in this world in a *ma'rūf* way (*ma'rūfan*) (XXXI, 14)

Blood relations are nearer to one another according to the Scripture of God than the believers and the emigrants. Nevertheless you should behave in a *ma'rūf* way towards them; so it is written in the Scripture. (XXXIII, 6)

*Ma'rūf* may be replaced by another form derived from the same root, '*urf*', without causing any change in meaning.

If you invite them to the Guidance they hear not. Thou seest them looking at thee without understanding anything. Be thou indulgent [i. e. do not try to convert them by force to Islam; that would only serve to inflame their hatred]. Exhort [men] to the '*urf*', and turn away from the *jāhil* (cf. p. 27 ff). (VII, 197-198)

## (2) *munkar*

*Ma'rūf* stands formally opposed to *munkar*, which, as we have seen, literally means 'unknown', 'foreign', and — precisely because of that — 'disapproved' or 'bad'. The Koran exhorts the Prophet and the believing community again and again, with unwearying emphasis, to 'enjoin the *ma'rūf* and forbid the *munkar*'. And in the form of this combination, both terms seem to stand for very general and comprehensive ideas of '(religiously) good' and '(religiously) bad', *ma'rūf* meaning any acts arising from, and in consonance with, Islamic belief, and *munkar* any acts that would conflict with God's commandments.

The believers, both men and women, are friends one of another. They enjoin the *ma'rūf* and forbid the *munkar*, and they perform the prayer and pay the alms, and they obey God and His Apostle. (IX, 72)

It is noteworthy that al-Baiḍāwī writes that the *ma'rūf* here means *īmān* 'belief' and *ṭā'ah* 'obedience', while *munkar* is equivalent to *kufṛ* and *ma'āṣi* 'disobedience'.

Let there be one community of you, all inviting [men] to good (*khair*, for this word see later), enjoining the *ma'rūf* and forbidding the *munkar*. Those shall be the [ultimate] winners. (III, 100)

You are the best community that has ever been brought forth unto men. You enjoin the *ma'rūf* and forbid the *munkar*, believing in God. (III, 106)

It is to be noted that a few verses later in the same passage it is affirmed that the *ṣāliḥ* people (see above, p. 207) are those who believe in God and the Last Day, and devote themselves to pious works, 'enjoining the *ma'rūf* and forbidding the *munkar*' (v. 110)

It is perhaps of more interest to observe that the 'hypocrites' are accused of doing the exact reverse of this: they enjoin the *munkar* and forbid the *ma'rūf*.

The *munāfiq*, both men and women, are all one; they enjoin the *munkar* and forbid the *ma'rūf* ..... They have forgotten God, and He has forgotten them. Verily, the *munāfiq* are the *fāsiq* [see Chap. X]. (IX, 68)

Next I shall give a few examples showing the use of the term *munkar*, disjoined from its usual companion, *munāfiq*. The first one is of particular significance because the context in which the word is found is, if not definitely non-religious, rather of a secular nature in that it has nothing to do directly with belief and *kufṛ*. Note that the word here appears in the form of *nukṛ*; the meaning remains exactly the same.

So the two [i. e. Moses (as a legendary figure) and the Mysterious Man commonly known as Khadīr] journeyed on until, when they met a boy, he [i. e. Khadīr] slew him. [Moses] said, 'What, hast thou slain a pure [i. e. innocent, *zakiyyah*] soul guilty of no murder? Verily thou hast done a hideous (*nukṛ*) thing'. (XVIII, 63)

The next example relates to the conduct of the disbelievers among the Israelites:

Cursed were those of the children of Israel who became *kāfirs* ..... ,

because they disobeyed ('*aṣau*) and were always transgressing (*ya'tadūna*, see above, p. 161 ff.). They never forbade one another any *munkar* that they used to do. Verily evil was that which they used to do. (V, 82)

In the passage which I quote next, the word *munkar* is applied to the formula of divorce — 'Thou art as my mother's back' — by which men in the Jahiliyyah used to divorce their wives.

Those of you who divorce their wives by the formula of 'mother's back', though they [i. e. wives] are not their mothers — their mothers being only those who gave them birth — verily, they utter an abominable thing (*munkar*) and a falsehood. (LVIII, 2)

That in this and other places *munkar* has semantically much in common with 'abomination' or 'indecentcy' is explicitly shown by the fact that, in actual fact, the word sometimes appears in combination with *fahshā* which, as we shall presently see, is the very word for such a concept.

Recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Scripture, and perform steadfastly the prayer. Verily, prayer forbids abomination (*fahshā*) and *munkar*. (XXIX, 49)

## V KHAIR AND SHARR

Probably *khair* represents the nearest Arabic equivalent for the English 'good'. It is a very comprehensive term, meaning as it does almost anything that may be considered in any respect valuable, beneficial, useful, and desirable. And even within the bounds of the Koranic verses, its semantic scope covers both the field of worldly affairs and that of religious belief. Let me begin with a brief examination of some examples falling under the former class. The first one relates to the legend of Solomon: one day, it is related, he was so lost in admiration of his beautiful houses that he forgot the duty of the evening prayer; when he came to himself a bitter remorse seized him, and he uttered the following words:

Verily, I have loved the love of good things (*khair*) better than the remembrance of my Lord, until the sun sank behind the veil. (XXXVIII, 31)

To compare with this is Surah C, v. 6-8, which I have given earlier in another connection. (see above, p. 117)

But the most representative use of *khair* in the field of worldly affairs is, without doubt, seen in those very numerous cases where the word behaves as a genuine synonym of *māl* 'wealth'.

It is prescribed for you; when death visits any of you, if he leaves some wealth (*khair*), he should bequeath in the *ma'rūf* way unto his parents and near relatives. (II, 175)

Particularly important is the following passage in which we see the word *khair* actually replaced by *māl* in the end, showing with utmost clarity that the two terms are interchangeable in contexts of this sort.

Whatever good (*khair*) you expend, it shall be for yourselves, for [in that case] you expend only because you seek God's countenance, and whatever good (*khair*) you expend, it shall be repaid you in full, and you will never be wronged, ..... and whatever god (*khair*) you expend, verily, God is aware of it. Those who expend their wealth (*amwāl*, pl. of *māl*) night and day, secretly and openly, verily, their reward is with their Lord. (II, 274-275)

No less important is the next verse in which the same word *khair* clearly fulfils a double function: it means 'wealth' in the first sentence, and, in the second, 'pious work'. It should be observed that *khair* in this latter sense is, as we shall presently see, almost synonymous with *ṣāliḥ* which we discussed earlier.

They will ask thee [Muhammad] concerning what they should expend [in alms]; say, 'Whatever good (*khair*) you expend must go to parents and kinsmen, orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer. Whatever good (*khair*) you do, verily, God is aware of it.' (II, 211)

Wealth represents the earthly good. Since, in actual fact, there can be an infinite variety of earthly goods or worldly values, *khair* proves to be a word of extremely wide application in this field. This phase of the matter, however, has practically little or no bearing on our immediate task. So I think I might be excused for proceeding now to the analysis of the semantic content of *khair* in contexts that are immediately related to religion and faith, without wasting any more words on the use of this term in non-religious contexts.

In this field too, the meaning of *khair* is exceedingly wide in scope, for, as one might expect, anything religiously valuable or beneficial to man can be the

denotatum of this word.

(1) God's bounty :

O God, owner of the Kingdom, ..... Thou makest whom Thou wilt rich and powerful, and Thou humblest whom Thou wilt. In Thy hand is the good (*khair*). (III, 25)

The context itself gives the implication that the 'good' here denotes the limitless bounty of God. Further confirmation of this view is afforded by vv. 66-67 of the same Surah, where we read: 'Verily, in God's hand is bounty (*faql*). ..... He specially favors with His mercy (*rahmah*) whom He will, for God is Lord of mighty bounty (*faql*)'.

(2) God's special favor (=revelation) :

Those who disbelieve among the people of the Scripture and the idol-worshippers love not that there should be sent down upon you anything good (*khair*) from your Lord. But God specially favors with His mercy whom He will, for God is Lord of mighty bounty. (II, 99)

It shall be said [on the Day of Resurrection] to those who fear [i. e. the pious believers], 'What has your Lord sent down?' They will answer, '[He has sent down upon us] good (*khair*)'. (XVI, 32)

(3) Divine revelation as something beneficial to man :

Some of them do harm to the Prophet, saying, 'He is only an ear.' Say, 'Yea, but an ear of good (*khair*) for you. He believes in God and believes the believers. And he is a mercy (*rahmah*) for those who believe among you.' (XI, 61 ; 62)

He [God] gives the Wisdom unto whom He will, and whoso is given the Wisdom, has been given much good (*khair*). (II, 272)

(4) Belief and genuine faith :

O Prophet, say unto the captives who are in your hands, 'If God knows any good (*khair*) in your hearts, He will give you better than that which has been taken from you, and will forgive you'. (VIII, 71)

(5) Positive effect of the faith :

On the day when one of the signs of thy Lord [i. e. a portent of

the approach of the Last Hour] does appear, its belief shall be of no avail to a soul which did not believe before, nor earned some good (*khair*) by its faith. (VI, 159)

(6) Pious work (= *ṣāliḥāt*) :

Perform you the prayer steadfastly, and pay the alms. Whatever good (*khair*) you send forward for the sake of your own souls, you shall find it with God. Verily, God sees everything you do. (II, 104)

Be you emulous in good works (*khairāt* pl.). (V, 53)

Verily, they vied one with another in good works (*khairāt*), and called upon Us yearningly, yet with fear, and were humble before Us. (XXI, 90)

(7) Excellent believer :

[Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,] verily, We made them pure with genuine sincerity, [that is,] the thought of the [Last] Abode. Thus in Our sight they were, verily, of the chosen, the good (*akhyār*, pl.). (XXXVIII, 46-47)

A glance at the examples given will make it clear that the denotata of the word *khair* in the field of religious matters fall roughly into two classes: one is the 'good', the source of which lies in God (1-3), and the other is the 'good' produced by man (4-6). In either case, the basic connotatum remains the same: it means something which may rightly be judged valuable from the specific point of view of the revealed religion.

Next we shall turn to those cases where the word *khair* is used in opposition to something else. The most usual antithesis of *khair* is furnished by *sharr* which functions as its direct opposite in any of its various meanings examined above, whether religious or non-religious. Thus, to take a typical example, when *khair* is used for 'happiness' or prosperity in worldly life, *sharr* is used for 'misfortune'.

Man tires not of praying for good (*khair*), and if evil (*sharr*) touches him, then he becomes disheartened and desperate. But if we let him taste mercy (*rahmah*) after distress (*ḍarrā'*) that has touched him he is sure to say, 'This is my own. I think not that the [Last] Hour is imminent.' (XLI, 49-50)

The precise meaning of the pair, *khair* — *sharr*, in verse 49 is disclosed by another pair that immediately follows it in verse 50, i. e., *rahmah* (happiness or good fortune conceived as God's mercy) and *qarrā'* (ill fortune or distress). It will not be out of place to add here that the Koran generally considers happiness and misery in this present world a kind of trial by means of which God distinguishes between true believers and *kāfirs*.

We test you [first] with evil (*sharr*) and Good (*khair*) as a trial;  
then unto Us you shall be brought back. (XXI, 36)

The next two examples are of particular significance for our purpose in a somewhat different respect; apparently, they simply state that the goodness or badness of a thing has, essentially, nothing to do with man's loving it or disliking it; that one should always judge by the ultimate issue to which it leads. Viewed from the reverse side, however, this would imply that the problem of whether a thing is *khair* or *sharr* tends to be made dependent on man's natural subjective reaction to it, that is, whether he likes it or hates it. In a word, *khair* and *sharr* stand for 'likes' and 'dislikes'.

Prescribed for you is fighting [in God's way], though it may be hateful to you. It may be, however, that you hate a thing which is [really] good (*khair*) for you, and that you love a thing which is bad (*sharr*) for you. God knows, but you know not.

(II, 212-213)

Treat them [your wives] well [lit. with *ma'rūf*]. Even if you hate them, it may be that you hate a thing wherein God has placed much good (*khair*) for you. (IV, 23)

It would be almost superfluous to point out that the basic opposition between *khair* and *sharr* occurs also in the properly religious field, denoting, then, pious deed and work of *kufir*, respectively.

Upon that day [i. e. the Day of Judgment] men shall issue forth in separate groups so as to witness their own deeds [in this world]. Whoso has done the weight of an atom of good (*khair*) shall see it, and whoso has done the weight of an atom of evil (*sharr*) shall see it. (XCIX, 6-8)

Sometimes *sharr* in this sense is replaced by another word *sū'* which we shall examine in the next section. Suffice it here to give an example of the opposition:

*khair* — *sū'*.

Upon the day when every soul will find what it has done of good (*khair*) brought forth before it, and what it has done of evil (*sū'*)  
..... (III, 28)

## VI *ḤSN AND SW'*

These two roots appear under various forms. I shall in what follows examine the most important of them.

### (1) *Ḥasan*

Like *khair*, *ḥasan* connotes a very comprehensive quality. It is an adjective which may be applied to almost anything that is felt to be 'pleasing', 'satisfying', 'beautiful', or 'admirable'. And, as in the case of *khair*, its scope covers both worldly and religious spheres of human life. A few examples will suffice to show this.

And of the fruits of the date-palm and grapes, you take therefrom intoxicating liquor and good (*ḥasan*) nourishment. Verily, therein is a sign for people who have sense. (XVI, 69)

Here, it is clear, the word *ḥasan* is roughly equivalent to 'delicious' or 'agreeable to the taste'. In the next example, the same word refers to something entirely different.

Her Lord received her [Mary, mother of Jesus] with a good [*ḥasan*] reception and made her grow up with a goodly (*ḥasan*) growth. (III, 32)

It should be noticed that in this verse, *ḥasan* appears twice in succession. In the first case it means the 'gracious' treatment Mary received at the hands of God; while in the second, it suggests that she grew up in good health to be a graceful woman.

The next passage applies the word to the ideal type of relation between men in social intercourse. More concretely, it enjoins upon men the duty of speaking always peaceably so as to maintain and promote peaceful relations among themselves.

Tell My servants to speak words that are more peaceable (*aḥsan*, comparative) For verily, Satan is trying to cause discord among them. Verily, Satan is ever for man a manifest enemy.

(XVII, 55)



*Hasan* can also be used in the sense of 'profitable' or 'lucrative' in the domain of business and commerce. The Koran uses it figuratively in reference to pious acts. By doing a pious deed, man lends a very advantageous loan to God.

Who is there that will lend a good (*hasan*) loan to God, so that He may increase it for him manifold? (II, 246)

Verily, those who give in charity, whether men or women, and thus have lent a good loan to God, it shall be multiplied for them, and they shall receive a generous hire. (XVII, 17)

God's promise is called a '*hasan* promise' because it promises much good to men provided they fulfil its conditions faithfully.

O my people, has not your Lord promised you a good (*hasan*) promise? (XX, 89)

Is he whom We have promised a good (*hasan*) promise [meaning the Garden of Heaven] ..... like him to whom We have given the momentary enjoyment of the life of the world, then on the day of resurrection he shall be of those arraigned? (XXVIII, 61)

Various other things are called *hasan* in the Koran, but this much seems to suffice for our present purpose. Let us remark only that the Koran uses this word also in appraising human conduct from the point of view of religion.

He created the heavens and the earth ..... so that He might try you, which of you is best (*aḥsan*, comp. or super.) in conduct. (XVIII, 9)

Who is better (*aḥsan*) in speech than he who, calling unto God and doing right (*ṣāliḥ*), says, 'Verily, I am of those who have surrendered (*muslimīna*)?' (XLI, 31)

But the job of denoting 'good work' in the sense of a 'pious' deed within the semantic boundary of the root *HSN* is chiefly assigned to the feminine form of *hasan*, to which we shall presently turn.

## (2) *Hasanah* and *Sayyi'ah*

*Hasanah* is the feminine form of the adjective *hasan* which we have just dealt with. The feminine form is used as a substantive, and means anything having

the quality designated by the adjective. Let us remark at the outset that the word in this sense is, at least in certain contexts, almost perfectly synonymous with *khair* which we discussed above, in both of its fields of application, worldly and religious. This point is admirably brought out in the following example:

Some there are who say, 'Our Lord, give us in this world (*hasanah*) and in the Hereafter, too, good (*hasanah*), and guard us from the chastisement of the Fire'. (II, 197; also VII, 155)

*Hasanah* in this quotation means clearly happiness, prosperity, good luck, or something like that. The word in this sense appears constantly in the Koran in close combination with its antithesis *sayyi'ah*. Here I give only one or two examples.

If good (*hasanah*) befall them, they say, 'This is from God,' but if evil befall them, they say, 'This is from thee [Muhammad]'. Say, 'Everything comes from God'. (IV, 80; also 70; VII, 128)

If good (*hasanah*) touch you [Muslims], it is disagreeable to them [kāfirs], but if evil (*sayyi'ah*) befall you, they rejoice thereat. (III, 116)

Both *hasanah* and *sayyi'ah* sometimes appear in the plural form, thus:

We have tried them with good things (*hasanāt*, pl.) and evil things (*sayyi'āt*, pl.) that haply they might return. (VII, 167)

We might do well to recall in this connection what was said above (p. 226) concerning the divine 'trial' of men by *khair* and *sharr*.

Just as *khair* which, as we saw, is in itself an exceedingly comprehensive word, can be used in the narrow, strictly religious sense of 'pious work', *hasanah* may be so used with almost exactly the same meaning content.

Verily, God will not treat anyone unjustly even the weight of an ant, and if it is a good work (*hasanah*), He will double it, and will give from Him part an immense reward. (IV, 44)

This is particularly the case when the word is used in explicit contrast to *sayyi'ah*. This latter word, on its part, changes then correspondingly from evil in general to ungodliness. Examples abound.

Whoso brings a good work (*hasanah*) [on the Day of Judgment]

shall have better than it; such shall be safe from terror that day.  
But whoso brings an evil deed (*sayyi'ah*), such shall have their  
faces thrust into the Fire. (XXVIII, 91-92; also XXVIII, 84, etc.)

In place of the phrase 'to bring a good work', the causative verb *aḥsana* (from the same root) may be used. This verb itself will be analyzed in detail in the following section. Here I am only concerned to show that the phrase 'he who *aḥsana*' is equivalent to 'he who does a *ḥasanah*', and that this implicit *ḥasanah* may further be contrasted explicitly with *sayyi'ah*.

For those who do good (*aḥsanū*, pl.) shall be the best reward.....  
Those shall be the inhabitants of Paradise, to dwell therein for ever.  
But for those who commit evil deeds (*sayyi'āt*), the recompense of  
each evil deed (*sayyi'ah*) shall be the like thereof. (X, 27-28)

### (3) *Aḥsana*

The verb *aḥsana* (inf. *iḥsān*) is one of the key ethical terms in the Koran. Most generally it means 'to do good', but the actual Koranic usage applies this word mainly to two particular classes of 'goodness': namely, (1) profound piety towards God and all human deeds that originate in it, and (2) acts motivated by the spirit of *ḥilm* (see above, p. 61).

#### (1) *aḥsana* = to do pious works:

Let us examine first those cases where *iḥsān* is roughly equivalent to piety and devotion, or to use a more characteristic expression, 'the fear of God'.

Verily, whoso fears God (*yattaqī*, from *taqwā*[y]) and is patient  
(*yaṣbir*)—surely God wastes not the wage of those who do good  
(*muḥsinīna*, part. pl.). (XII, 90)

It should be noted that here the semantic content of *iḥsān* is defined in terms of 'fear' and 'patience', both of which, as we saw in Chap. XII, belong in the most characteristic features of the 'believer'. In the next example, the same word *muḥsin* (part. of *aḥsana*) is equated with *muttaqī* 'godfearing', while its concrete denotatum is explicitly described as various acts of pious devotion:

Verily, the godfearing (*muttaqīna*, pl.) are now [i.e. after Resurrection] in gardens and springs, taking whatever their Lord has given them. Verily, they were before [i.e. in the present world] *muḥsinīna*: but little of the night they slept, at the dawn they would ask forgiveness, and in their wealth even the beggar and

the outcast had a share. (LI, 15-19)

That *aḥsana* in contexts of this sort is practically synonymous with 'doing the *ṣāliḥāt*' will be made clearer from such examples as follow:

.....The *muḥsinīna* who perform the prayer steadfastly, and give alms, and have unswerving faith in the Hereafter. Those are upon the Guidance from their Lord; those are sure to prosper.

(XXXI, 2-3)

Verily, those who believe and do good works (*ṣāliḥāt*)—verily, We waste not the wage of him who does good works (*aḥsana* 'amalan, lit. 'is good as to deed'). (XVIII, 29)

We might add that Abraham who, in complete obedience to God's command, attempted to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, is called, in reference to this very act, a 'gooddoer' (*muḥsin*):

O Abraham, thou hast already carried out the dream. Verily, thus do We recompense the *muḥsinīna*. This is indeed a manifest trial. (XXXVII, 105)

Such being the case, it is hardly surprising that *muḥsin* should sometimes be used in contradistinction to *kāfir* or some of its semantic equivalents.

So God rewards them for these [pious] words with gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever. That is the reward of the *muḥsinīna*. But those who disbelieve (*akfarū*) and cry lies to Our signs, they shall be the inhabitants of Hell. (V, 88)

Of their seed some are *muḥsin*, and some are plainly *ẓālim li-nafsi-hi* ['one who does wrong to one's self', for this peculiar expression, see p. 154]. (XXXVII, 113)

This is a Scripture confirming, in the Arabic language, to warn those who do wrong (*ẓalamū*) and bring good tidings to the *muḥsinīna*. (XLVI, 11)

#### (2) *aḥsana* = loving-kindness:

As I have suggested above, *iḥsān* has another important application: it may denote loving deeds towards others, that is, to be more precise, deeds motivated by the

fundamental attitude of *hilm*. That *ihsān* is the most immediate manifestation of the spirit of *hilm* will be clearly perceived in the following example:

..... A Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth is prepared for those who fear [God], the godfearing who expend [in alms] in prosperity and adversity, and repress their rage, and pardon men, for God loves the *muhsinina*. (III, 128)

He who is always willing to help the poor, is slow to anger, forbears from retaliating, and forgives offences—this is no other than the very embodiment of the virtue of *hilm* as we saw in Chap. VI. The next verse is another example showing the close connection between *ihsān* and *hilm*. In other words, the thought expressed by the verse is just the contrary of the dominating spirit of the Jahiliyyah.

Thou [Muhammad] wilt not cease to discover treachery [i.e. the act of breaking the compact] from them [the children of Israel], save a few of them. But pardon them, for God loves the *muhsinina*. (V, 16)

The Koran never wearies of emphasizing the duty of showing kindness to parents, if only for the reason that 'his mother bore him with trouble and gave birth to him with trouble' (XLVI, 14). The attitude of filial piety is called by the name of *ihsān*.

Thy Lord has decreed that you worship not any save Him, and that you should be good (*ihsān*) to parents. If one or both of them attains old age with thee, say not to them 'Fie!' nor scold them, but speak unto them respectful (*karīm*) words, and let down upon them the wing of submission out of mercy (*rahmah*) and say, 'My Lord, have mercy upon them just as they did look after me when I was little'. (XVII, 24-25)

The latter half of this passage shows in concrete terms the real nature of the 'kindness' in question.

As is only to be expected in the spiritual climate of the Koran, giving an outstanding emphasis on charity, the meaning of *ihsān* in this sense shows a strong tendency to get contracted from comprehensive 'loving-kindness' to that expressed in generosity in almsgiving. A good example of this I gave earlier in connection with a different subject (see Chap. VII, p. 71). Here is another example, which is perhaps even better in that it brings out most clearly the element of 'generosity' in *ihsān* by contrasting it with *bukhl*, 'stinginess'.

Be good (*ihsān*) to your parents, and near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and the neighbour, whether of kin or not of kin, the companion at your side, the wayfarer, and what your right hands possess [i.e. your slaves]. Verily, God loves not those who are proud and arrogant, who are not only niggardly, but also bid others be niggardly, and hide that which God has bestowed upon them of His bounty. (IV, 40-41)

#### (4) *Sayyi'ah*

Like the corresponding *hasanah*, *sayyi'ah* is properly the feminine form of an adjective, used in the Koran mostly as a substantive. The adjective in question is *sayyi'*, which appears in Surah XXXV and discloses remarkably well the Koranic meaning of the root *SW'*. It runs as follows:

They swore by God a solemn oath that if a warner [i.e. Prophet] came to them, they would surely be more rightly guided than any of the nations. Yet, when a warner did come to them, they only became the more averse, behaving the more proudly (*istihbar*, see p. 132 ff) in the land, and plotting more evil. But the evil (*sayyi'*) plotting encloses only those who make it. (XXXV, 40-41)

Here it is clear that the 'evil plotting' (*al-makr al-sayyi'*) refers to all the desperate efforts by which his kāfir opponents sought to undermine the monotheistic movement of Muhammad.

Turning now to the feminine form, *sayyi'ah*, used as a substantive, we may recall that it was already partly examined in an earlier section dealing with *hasanah*. There we saw that *sayyi'ah* may denote two entirely different kinds of things: it may, on the one hand, mean an unfavorable and disagreeable turn of affairs in human life, all adverse circumstances and ill luck that befall a man; it may, on the other hand, be used for any 'evil' work a man does against God's will. Here we shall examine more carefully the second of these two meanings.

Most generally, *sayyi'ah* appears to mean the consequences of *kufr*. The examples that follow will make this point abundantly clear.

If the evil-doers (*alladhina zalamū*, from *zūlm*=*kufr*, see above, p. 152 ff) possessed all the wealth on earth, and the like thereof with it, they would ransom themselves therewith from the evil (*sū'*, from the same root as *sayyi'ah*, used approximately in the first of the two meanings of *sayyi'ah* as distinguished above) of the chastisement on the Day of Resurrection. But God will disclose to their eyes what they never expected to see; there shall appear to them

the evils (*sayyi'āt*, pl.) of that they have earned, and they shall find themselves surrounded on all sides by that which they used to mock at.....

The evil (*sayyi'āt*) of that they have earned will smite them. And such of these people [i.e. the Meccan *kāfirs*] as do wrong (*ḡalamū*), the evils (*sayyi'āt*) of that they have earned will smite them, nor will they be able to escape this.

(XXXIX, 48-49, 52, see also XVI, 36)

The next one refers to the golden Calf which the people of Moses made and worshipped in his absence. So it is evident that the 'evil' deeds here spoken of mean, as al-Baiḡāwī notes, nothing other than the works of *kufr* and *ma'āṡī* 'disobedience' to which they gave way.

Verily, those who worshipped the Calf as their god, they shall incur the wrath of God, and abasement shall befall them in the life of this world. So do We ever recompense those who forge (*muṡṡarīna*, from *iftirā*, see above, p. 94 ff). Those, however, who have done evil deeds (*sayyi'āt*), but repent thereafter and come back to belief, verily thy Lord thereafter is Forgiving and Merciful.

(VII, 152; see also II, 194, V, 70, etc.)

It is significant that *sayyi'ah* is sometimes opposed to *ṡāliḡah* which I examined at the outset of this chapter. An example showing this relation between *sayyi'ah* and *ṡāliḡah* was also given there (p. 209). Here is one more telling example:

As for those who believe (*āmanū*) and do good works (*ṡāliḡāt*, pl.), We shall surely remit them their *sayyi'āt* and shall recompense them the best (*aḡsan*) of what they used to do. (XXIX, 6)

The expression here translated 'remit (*kaffara*) the *sayyi'āt*' appears in another very important passage, which happens to be part of the prayer of the believers given in Surah III.

Our Lord, We heard a caller calling unto the faith, 'Believe in your Lord!' and we believed. Our Lord, forgive us, therefore, our sins (*dhunūb*, pl. of *dhanb*) and remit (*kaffir*) from us our evil deeds (*sayyi'āt*). (III, 191)

The commentators usually make a distinction between *dhunūb* and *sayyi'āt* by saying that the former denotes *kabā'ir* (lit. 'big ones', that is, great or deadly sins),

while the latter is equivalent to *saghā'ir* (lit. 'small ones'). And this view seems to be fully confirmed by another passage:

If you avoid great sins (*kabā'ir*) that are [formally] forbidden you, We will remit from you your evil deeds (*sayyi'āt*) and make you enter [Paradise] with a noble entrance. (IV, 35)

No one will deny that this passage recognizes a very serious difference in degree—and, practically, even in kind—between 'great' sins and 'small' ones. In reality, however this distinction stands on a very precarious foothold, for, after all, there is undeniable uncertainty as to what is actually and concretely meant by 'big' sins. One thing would seem to be certain beyond any doubt. Since, a little later on in the same Surah, we find an explicit statement that, 'God forgives not that aught should be associated with Him, but He forgives anything short of that to whomsoever He will. Whoso associates with God has forged (*iftarā*[y] a great sin (*ithm*), for this word see later).' (Surah IV, 51), it would appear that we could justly regard *shirk* 'associating' as constituting the greatest of all unpardonable sins. But, although this is undoubtedly true in this particular case, it does not in any way preclude the other word *sayyi'ah* from denoting 'associating'. As a matter of actual fact, we have seen above that the worshipping of the golden Calf—this is nothing but a flagrant case of 'associating'—is sometimes counted among the *sayyi'āt*.

In another passage from Surah XVII, after giving a list of deeds that God has expressly forbidden, the Koran pronounces the verdict: 'All this—the evilness of it (*sayyi'u-hu*) is in the sight of your Lord abhorred' (v. 40). The items enumerated there are: (1) the slaying of one's own children for fear of poverty, (2) fornication, (3) murder without reason, (4) embezzlement of the legal property of the orphan, (5) dishonesty in commerce, (6) insolence and arrogance. (vv. 33-39). Some at least of these are usually counted among the *kabā'ir*. We might add that in Surah XI, v. 20, sodomy is called by the name of *sayyi'ah*—the sodomy which, as we saw earlier, is often described in the very Koran as 'an act which is more abominable in the sight of God than anything that has ever been committed by any being in the world.'

#### (5) *Sā'a* and *Asā'a*

*Sā'a* and *asā'a* are two verbal forms derived from the root *SW*, the former being intransitive and the latter causative. Let us begin with the causative form. Briefly, it describes *sayyi'ah* in its dynamic, active aspect; that is, it conveys the idea of 'producing some *sayyi'ah*'. And, of course, in the Koran, the *sayyi'ah* meant is always an act of *kufr*, which is, so to speak, the *sayyi'ah* par excellence. This connection is brought out with explicit clarity in the following example which contrasts 'one' who *asā'a* with 'one' who does *ṡāliḡ*.

Whoso does right (*'amila ṣāliḥan*), it is for his own soul, and whoso does evil (*asā'a*), it is against it. (XLV, 14)

No less significant is the next example in which *musī'* (part. of *asā'a*) is contrasted with 'those who believe and do *ṣāliḥāt*'. Moreover, *musī'* is likened to a 'blind' man, while the latter is compared to a 'seeing' man, the commonest metaphors in the Koran for the *kāfir* and the believer, respectively.

The blind and the seeing man are not equal, nor those who believe and do the pious deeds (*ṣāliḥāt*) and the evildoer (*musī'*). (XL, 60)

The next one tells us in more concrete terms what the act of *asā'a* consists in. It sees 'evil' in the act of *takdhīb*, which is another piece of evidence that *asā'a* means 'to act in a *kāfir* way'.

The ultimate end of those who did evil (*asā'ū*, pl.) was evil (*sū'*, see later), in that they cried lies to the signs of God and mocked at them. (XXX, 9)

Now we turn to the intransitive *sā'a*, concerning which we may be very brief seeing that it offers semantically no difficult problems. The form literally means 'to be, or become, evil, foul, or abominable', and is used in declarative sentences of the type: *Sā'a hādihā madhhaban* 'Evil is—this—as a way (of living)', stating with emphasis that something is 'evil'. It should be remarked that, in the Koran, it is most frequently used in the first of the two meanings of 'evil'—*SW* as distinguished above. But, of course, it is not the absolute rule. Of the four typical examples I give in the following, the first three show the use of *sā'a* in the former, and the last one in the latter sense of *SW*.

Whoso takes Satan for a comrade, an evil comrade (*sā'a qarīnan*) is he! (IV, 42)

Such ones [i.e. 'those who wrong themselves'], their resort shall be Hell. An evil journey (*sā'at maṣīran*) shall it be! (IV, 99)

.....that they may bear their whole burdens on their backs. ....

Aye, evil shall be their burdens! (XVI, 27)

They [the idolaters] barter the signs of God for a small price, and debar from His way. Verily, evil is that which they have been

doing (*sā'a mā kānū ya'malūna*).

(IX, 9)

#### (6) *Bi'sa* and *Ni'ma*

Although etymologically these have nothing to do with the root *SW* which occupies us now, I think we can most conveniently deal with them at this place immediately after the exposition of the use of the verb *sā'a*. For, in use as well as in meaning, *sā'a* and *bi'sa* (and the opposite pair, *ḥasuna* and *ni'ma*) are most intimately connected with each other, and the basic sentence structure is essentially the same in both cases.

*Ni'ma* and *bi'sa* are two defective verbs (see Socin-Brockelmann: *Arabische Grammatik*, § 22 Anm.), generally known as 'verbs of praise and blame', and sentences formed on them are exclamatory expressions of admiration and blame, respectively, thus:

*Ni'ma al-raḡulu Zaidun* 'what a good man Zaid is!'

*Bi'sa al-raḡulu Zaidun* 'what a bad man Zaid is!'

The essential similarity between *ni'ma* and *ḥasuna* (verb corresponding to the above-discussed adjective *ḥasan*) on one hand, and *bi'sa* and *sā'a*, on the other, is most clearly brought out in the following passage, where these two pairs appear in succession forming a very evident parallelism:

Verily, we have prepared for the wrong-doers (*ḡālimīna*) Fire whose tent shall encompass them. If they ask for help, they shall be helped with water like molten copper which shall burn their faces. What an evil drink (*bi'sa al-sharāb*) and what an evil resting place (*sā'at murtafaḡan*)!

Verily, those who believe and do good works (*ṣāliḥāt*), verily, We will not waste the wage of him who does good works (*aḥsana 'amalan*, lit. 'he is good in respect of conduct'). Theirs shall be Gardens of Eden, beneath which rivers flow, and they shall be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they shall wear green garments of silk and brocade, reclining therein on divans. What a good reward (*ni'ma al-thawāb*) and what a good resting-place (*ḥasunat murtafaḡan*)! (XVIII, 28-30)

The passage, in addition to showing the exact parallelism in structure and meaning between *bi'sa* and *sā'a* (and *ni'ma* and *ḥasuna*), gives a very instructive glimpse into the element of hedonism that underlies the act of valuation expressed by such sentences. Almost always valuation of things in this sphere is explicable in terms of physical satisfaction that can be derived from them. Thus we see it is no accident



that in the Koran *ni'ma* is used most frequently in reference to Gardens of Eden as the place of the highest pleasures, and *bi'sa* in reference to Hell as the ultimate place of everlasting torments.

Like *sā'a*, however, these are also sometimes used in sentences expressing moral (and religious) evaluation.

What an excellent slave [i.e. believer] he [Job] was (*ni'ma al-'abd*)! Verily, he returned [i.e. he repented of his sins] constantly.  
(XXXVIII, 44)

Perform you steadfastly the prayer, and give alms, and hold fast to God. He is your Protector. What an excellent Protector (*ni'ma al-mawlā* [y]), and what an excellent Helper (*ni'ma al-naṣīr*) He is!  
(XXII, 78)

In this example, *ni'ma*-structure is used in appraising God as the supreme Protector of men. In the next the corresponding *bi'sa*-structure is used in reference to an idol.

He calls upon him [idol or false god] who is more likely to harm him than to benefit him. What an evil protector (*bi'sa al-mawlā* [y]) and what an evil friend (*bi'sa al-'ashīr*)!  
(XXII, 13)

#### (7) SAW' and SŪ'

After all I have said in the foregoing about various words derived from the root *SW'*, further detailed discussion of these two remaining forms, of considerable importance though they actually are, would only be a tedious repetition. All I want to do in the present context is to sketch some of the arguable points relating to their meaning and form.

*Saw'* is properly one of the infinitives of the verb *sā'a* that we have seen above, and is characteristically used as an epithet of the analytic type (e.g. 'a man of courage'), while *sū'* is the abstract noun from the same root. As is obvious, they are twin sisters, extremely similar not only in form but also in meaning, and in some contexts the distinction itself becomes highly precarious and problematic. We shall see this presently.

Let us take up *saw'* first, and examine a few of its typical uses. The construction always takes the analytic form to be represented by the pattern: *rajul al-saw'i* (or *saw'in*, without determination), meaning literally 'a man of the being-evil', 'a man of evil nature or conduct'.

'O Mary [thus say people to Mary who has just given birth to Jesus

before getting married to any man], thou hast indeed committed a monstrous (*fariy*) thing! (cf. p. 260).....[And yet,] thy father was not a bad man (*imra' saw'in*), nor was thy mother a harlot!  
(XIX, 29)

Here it is contextually certain that *saw'* implies unchastity or sexual licence. In a similar way, the people of Sodom is called in Surah XXI, v. 74, *qaum saw'in* ('people of evil doings,' 'an evil people') on account of their abominable custom.

On a level which is more properly religious, the same expression *qaum saw'in* is used in reference to Noah's folk, the evidence of their evilness being, this time, the *takdhīb*.

We delivered him [Noah] from the people who cried lies to Our signs. Verily, they were an evil people, so We drowned them all.  
(XXI, 77)

The next passage alludes to some of the Bedouin tribes who, on some excuse or other, tried—and succeeded in the attempt—to shirk the duty of serving in the Holy War on the occasion of the Khudaibiyah expedition.

Nay, but you thought that the Apostle and the believers would never return again to their families, and that appeared very fine to your minds. You did think an evil thought (*ẓann al-saw'i* lit. 'thought of evilness') and you were a people of no value (*būr*, a word meaning 'decayed' or 'corrupt').  
(XLVIII, 12)

The reading *ẓann al-saw'i* is not the only possible one in this and other similar instances; according to some authorities, the alternative reading *ẓann al-sū'i* is just as much permissible as this. In the opinion of some others, again, there occurs a definite difference in meaning according to whether one reads *saw'i* or *sū'i*, when both are possible: the former implies *fasād* 'corruption' or *radiy* 'destruction', while the latter means *ḡarar* 'harm' or 'damage', or *hazimah* 'defeat' and *sharr* 'evilness of condition' (cf. *Muḥīt al-Muḥīt*, I, p. 1021). All this, however, is in my opinion quite groundless. The real distinction between the two phrases, *ẓann al-saw'i* and *ẓann al-sū'i*, belongs, I think, rather to the sphere of grammatical syntax: in *ẓann al-saw'i*, *saw'* behaves as an epithet of the analytic type—'thought of evilness' meaning 'an evil thought'—while in *ẓann al-sū'i*, *sū'* acts as the 'object' of *ẓann* which is itself more of a verbal nature than in the former type—'the thinking of evilness, i. e. of evil things'.

.....The hypocrites, men and women, and the idol-worshippers, men

and women, who think (*ẓānnīna*, part. pl) of God evil thoughts (*ẓann al-saw'*)—for them shall be an evil turn of fortune (*dā'irah al-saw'i*), for God is wroth with them and has cursed them.

(XLVIII, 5)

Besides the same *ẓann al-saw'i* (or *sū'i*), this passage contains another phrase with *al-saw'i*: *dā'irah al-saw'i* lit. 'turn of evilness'. This, too, allows of two alternative readings, *saw'* and *sū'*. The same applies also to Surah XXV, 42, where we find: 'the city that was rained on (*umṭirat*, verb, pass.) by an evil rain (*maṭar al-saw'i*). The city referred to is generally said to be Sodom that was utterly destroyed according to tradition by the rain of stones. In this instance, too, *sw'* is read in two different ways, and some authorities try to establish a distinction in meaning between them, saying that if it is read *sū'i* it means 'damage' or 'injury', and if read *saw'i* it means 'destruction'.

Be that as it may, it is certain that the infinitive *saw'* as an epithet is semantically of very wide application, being capable of denoting almost anything that can be called *sayyi'*. This is no less true of the noun *sū'*.

Most generally *sū'* means anything felt as being displeasing, disagreeable, or abominable, anything that arouses aversion.

When any one of them is given the news of a girl [i. e. the news that a girl has been born—referring to the notorious dislike of the pre-Islamic Arabs for female children, that went often the length of burying alive female babies], his face grows dark and he burns with wrath, and he hides himself from his folk because of the evil (*sū'*) of the news that has come to him. (XVI, 60-61)

This example describes the subjective aspect of the experience connected with the name of *sū'*. And this enables us to understand quite naturally why Hell is so often called in the Koran an 'evil' abode (or resort).

[The kāfirs]—upon them is the curse, and for them is the evil abode (*sū' al-dāri* lit. 'evilness of the house'). (XIII, 25)

Examples are found in plenty in the Koran, showing that *sū'* in this basic sense may be applied to any kind of harm, injury, affliction, and misfortune.

But there is no more need here to examine them in detail. So we shall turn our attention immediately to the way *sū'* is used in the ethico-religious field. The first example I give is taken from the Chapter of Joseph. The speaker is Joseph himself:

[My innocence is at last proved]. And yet I do not claim to be perfectly innocent, for the human soul ever incites to evil (*sū'*), save what my Lord has mercy on. (XII, 53)

Here evidently 'evil' means unbridled indulgence in sensual appetites and worldly pleasures.

The next quotation is given as good evidence to show that *sū'* in the religious field is perfectly synonymous with the above-discussed *sayyi'āt*:

God is only bound to turn towards [i. e. forgive] those who do evil (*sū'*) in ignorance, then quickly turn again [i. e. repent] ..... But God is not to turn towards those who do evil deeds (*sayyi'āt*), until, when one of them is about to die, says, 'Now I turn [i. e. repent]'. (IV, 21-22)

Exactly the same kind of *sū'* that is, 'evil done in ignorance', is significantly contrasted in the next example with *aṣḥaḥa* (see above, p. 208):

Whoso of you does evil (*sū'*) in ignorance, and turns again there-after and does right (*aṣḥaḥa*), verily, [for him] God is Forgiving and Merciful. (VI, 51)

*Sū'* is also used synonymously with *ẓulm al-nafs* 'the wronging of one's own soul' which is, as we saw, a very characteristic Koranic expression for *kufr*.

..... the kāfirs whom the angels seize [i. e. cause to die] while they are busy wronging themselves. Then [only] will they submit [and say], 'We were not doing any evil (*sū'*)' Nay, but verily God knows well of what you were doing. (XVI, 30; see also IV, 110)

In the next passage, the referent of *sū'* is described in the most concrete terms. Here we have an instance showing what kind of act was an 'evil act' to Muhammad's mind.

Pharaoh said, 'O Haman, build for me a tower, so that haply I may reach the place of ascent, the place of ascent of the heavens, and look upon the God of Moses, for I think him a liar.' In this way Pharaoh looked upon his evil act (*sū' amali-hi* lit. 'evil of his act') as something good, and thus was debarred from the right way. (XL, 38-40)

We may add that in Surah XXXV, 9, the same phrase *sū* 'amali-hi is opposed to *hasan*.

## VII FAḤSHĀ

*Faḥshā* or *fāḥishah* signifies anything exceeding the proper bounds, anything foul and abominable beyond measure. It is very often used in the Koran in conjunction with *SW* which we have just examined.

Follow not the footsteps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you.  
He enjoins upon you naught but *sū* and *faḥshā*. (II, 164)

The commentators have tried to distinguish between *sū* and *faḥshā* in this verse; much ink has been shed, and a variety of opinions have been offered, but not any of them is sufficiently reliable. All we can gather from them is that the two words are roughly synonymous with each other.

She [the wife of the Egyptian Governor] desired him passionately, and he [Joseph] would have desired her too, had it not been that he saw [just then] a proof of his Lord. Thus did We turn away from him *sū* and *faḥshā*. (XII, 23-34)

Here it is contextually clear that the expression, *sū* and *faḥshā*, means fornication. The same reference is made explicit in the next example:

Draw not near to fornication; verily, it is a *fāḥishah*; it is evil (*sā'a*) as a way. (XVII, 34)

Sodomy is also very frequently called *fāḥishah*. Here I give only one example:

And Lot, when he said to his people [i.e. the inhabitants of Sodom], 'What, do you commit such *fāḥishah* as no one in all the world ever committed before you!' (VII, 78)

It is to be remarked that in Surah XI, v. 80, the same 'abomination' is expressed by *sayyi'ah*, further evidence that *FH-SH* and *SW* were felt to be roughly synonymous in cases of this sort.

In another passage concerning the pagan custom of marrying the wife of one's own father after his death (or divorce), a word meaning the utmost degree of hatred, *maqt*, is used in conjunction with *fāḥishah*:

Marry not women your fathers married, except bygone cases, for it is surely abomination (*fāḥishah*), a hateful thing (*maqt*), and an evil way (*sā'a sabīlan* lit. 'is evil as a way'). (IV, 26)

The word *munkar* (see above, p. 218ff) also appears alongside of *fāḥishah*.

O believers, follow not the footsteps of Satan, for upon those who follow the footsteps of Satan, verily, he enjoins *faḥshā* and *munkar*. (XXIV, 21)

Here we see the occurrence of *faḥshā* explicitly attributed to Satan's instigation. Surah II, v. 164, quoted at the outset of this section (p. 242) is another example. Indeed, it is characteristic of *fāḥishah* and *faḥshā* that they appear in the Koran very often associated with Satan's name.

Satan promises you poverty and enjoins upon you *faḥshā*, while God promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty. (II, 271)

We have made the Satans patrons of those who believe not. And whenever they commit a *fāḥishah*, they say, 'We found our fathers practising it, and God bade us do it'. Say, 'God does not bid you to *faḥshā*'. Do you say against God that which you know not?' (VII, 26-27)

On the contrary, God forbids strictly all *faḥshā* and enjoins justice and kindness:

Verily, God bids to justice (*adl*, p. 214) and kindness (*ihsān* p. 230), and giving to kinsfolk, and forbids *faḥshā* and *munkar* and insolence (*baghy*, see p. 137ff). (XVI, 92)

## VIII ṬAYYIB AND KHABĪTH

*Ṭayyib* is an adjective, the most basic semantic function of which is to denote any quality that strikes the senses—the senses of taste and odor, in particular—as very delightful, pleasant, and sweet. As would be expected, it is most frequently used to qualify food, water, perfume, and the like. Beyond this proper field of application, it may also be applied to various other kinds of things; thus in the Koran we find such combinations as: *riḥ ṭayyibah* 'a favorable wind' that carries a ship smoothly on the sea, as opposed to *riḥ āṣifah* 'a stormy wind' (Surah X, 23), *bald ṭayyib* 'a land of good and fertile soil' (VII, 56; also 14), *masākin ṭayyibah*

'delightful dwellings', speaking of the final resort of the believing men and women in Gardens of Eden (IX, 73), etc.

It is noteworthy that in the case of food, which, as everybody knows, constitutes an important item on the list of those things that, everywhere at primitive stages of cultural development, tend to be surrounded by all sorts of taboo bans, the Koran brings in the specific idea of 'sanctification', by associating *ṭayyib* with *ḥalāl* meaning 'lawful' in the sense of 'free from all taboo'. So in this particular case, *ṭayyib* becomes almost a synonym of *ḥalāl* which we shall examine in the next section.

They will ask thee [Muhammad] what is made lawful (*uḥilla* verb, pass.' meaning 'to be made *ḥalāl*') for them. Answer, 'Lawful you are all good things (*ṭayyibāt*, noun, pl.).' (v, 6)

Eat of what God has provided you as lawful (*ḥalāl*) and good (*ṭayyib*). (v, 90)

The word *ṭayyib* may also—though not so frequently—be used in the properly ethico-religious sense. Here is a very good example:

Gardens of Eden they shall enter, beneath which rivers flow ..... Thus God recompenses those who fear (*muttaqīna*), whom the angels seize [i.e. cause to die] while they are good (*ṭayyibīna* pl.). They [i.e. the angels] say, 'Peace be upon you! Enter Paradise because of what you used to do [on earth]'. (XVII, 33-34)

It stands patent contextually that *ṭayyib* here replaces *muttaqī* 'godfearing'. Besides, it is opposed to 'those who wrong themselves', (in verse 30) an expression which, as we know, means 'kāfir'.

*Ṭayyib* in the phrase *al-kalīm al-ṭayyib* 'the good speech' that appears in Surah XXXV, v. 11, must be of a similar nature. It is generally explained as denoting the formula of *tauḥīd*: 'There is no god but God'. At any rate, it is certain that *ṭayyib* in this expression means 'religiously good' or 'pious', for the phrase itself appears in this verse in the closest combination with *al-'amal al-ṣāliḥ* 'pious deed'. The verse runs as follows:

Unto Him ascend good (*ṭayyib*) words, and the good (*ṣāliḥ*) deed  
He exalts. (XXXV, 11)

The exact contrary of *ṭayyib* is *khabiṭh*. Here it will be no more necessary to examine cases in which this word is applied to ordinary things and events. All we have to do is to consider briefly some of the typical examples showing its use in

the ethico-religious domain. Let us begin with one that concerns the problem of the primitive 'sanctification' of food referred to above:

He [the Prophet] makes lawful (*yuhillu*) [in the name of God] for them all good things (*ṭayyibāt*) and makes unlawful (*yuharrim*) for them the evil things (*khabiṭh*, noun, pl.). (VII, 156)

It is clear that the pair *ṭayyib*—*khabiṭh* is very significantly made to correspond with another pair *ḥalāl*—*ḥarām*. As we shall see presently, the latter of these pairs is based on the idea of ritual 'cleanness' properly belonging to the domain of taboo-thinking.

In the next passage, *ṭayyib*—*khabiṭh* corresponds to 'believer'—'kāfir':

Those who disbelieve will be gathered into Gehenna, that God may distinguish the wicked (*khabiṭh*) from the good (*ṭayyib*), and put the wicked one upon another, and, heaping them up all together, put them into Gehenna. (VIII, 37-38)

Bad women (*khabiṭhāt*) [are fit to be mated] with bad men (*khabiṭhīn*), and bad men with bad women. Good women (*ṭayyibāt*) [are fit to be mated] with good men (*ṭayyibīn*), and good men with good women. (XXIV, 26)

In the next one, *khabiṭh* is applied to the abominable custom of the people of Sodom, who are themselves described as a people of *saw'* and *fāsiqs*. All these elements, combined, serve to bring out with utmost clarity the concrete meaning content of the word *khabiṭh*.

Unto Lot We gave judgment and knowledge, and We delivered him from the city that used to do abominations (*khabiṭh*, pl.). Verily, they were an evil people (*qawm saw'in*), all *fāsiqs* [for *fāsiq* see Chap. X]. (XXI, 74)

## IX ḤARĀM AND ḤALĀL

With this pair of words we step in a very strange world of primitive religion. As I have suggested more than once in the course of this book, *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* go back to the old Semitic idea of ritual cleanness. Speaking more strictly, *ḥarām* is the taboo, *ḥalāl* being simply anything that is not held under the taboo ban anything that 'has been set free' from it. *Ḥarām* is applied to things, places, persons, and actions; and everything that is so designated is definitely separated from the

world of the profane and is raised to a peculiar level of being, that of the 'sacred' in the twofold sense of holiness and pollution; it is, at any event, something, unapproachable, untouchable.

It is highly instructive to see that in the law-books by later jurists, *ḥarām* is generally defined in a formal way as 'an action punishable by law' or— which amounts to the same thing — 'anything absolutely forbidden.' The Koranic use of the word seems to represent just an intermediate stage in the process of development from the original taboo idea to this legal concept. This incorporation of a pagan idea into Islam was made possible by the introduction of God's free decision: with absolute freedom God forbids anything and removes the ban from anything; and anything He has forbidden will be henceforward *ḥarām*, and the contrary *ḥalāl*. Thus age-old ideas of *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* have become most intimately connected with God, as immediate expressions of His Will. This direct consequential connection between God's act of forbidding a thing and the thing's being a *ḥarām* is well brought out in the following passage.

We [God] covenanted with you [children of Israel], 'You shall not shed your blood [i.e. you shall not kill one another], and you shall not drive yourselves [i.e. one another] out of home'. .... But now you are killing one another, and driving a party of you out of home ....., when their expulsion was made a *ḥarām* to you.

(II, 78, 79)

It is natural that, with the advent of a new Prophet, as a new mouthpiece of divine will, there should occur considerable changes in the existent system of 'lawful' and 'unlawful'. Thus Jesus in the Koran declares among other things:

I will surely make *ḥalāl* (*uḥilla*, verb,) to you some of the things that were before *ḥarām* (*ḥurrima* verb, pass.) to you. (III, 44)

In like manner, now that Islam has come, all the taboo-laws of Israel, Muhammad declares, are completely superseded by the new—and of course, better—enactments. Thus, according to Muhammad, the Jewish food-taboos, to take the most conspicuous instance, were originally instituted as a punishment for their insolence (Surah VI, v. 147). As to the numerous taboos of paganism, they are mere 'forgery' *iftirā* against God (*ibid.* v. 145). But instead of abolishing food-restrictions altogether he draws up a modified list of taboos, and proclaims them in the name of God:

These only He has forbidden (*ḥarrama*) you: what is dead [i.e. the meat of an animal that has died of itself, not slaughtered], and blood [shed], and the flesh of swine, and whatsoever has been

consecrated to other than God.'

(II, 168; also VI, 146)

Made lawful (*uḥilla*) for you is the game of the sea and to eat thereof, a provision for you and for the seafarers. But forbidden (*ḥurrima*) to you is the game of the land so long you are in the state of *ḥarām* [i.e. on the pilgrimage]. (v, 97)

It should be observed that those who perform the pilgrimage themselves, after they have laid aside their 'secular' clothes and put on instead a 'sacred' garment, are definitely in the state of taboo; they should not cut their hair and pare their nails, and sexual intercourse is a strict prohibition.

It is interesting to note that Muhammad uses this taboo vocabulary sometimes on a much higher level than this: in matters, namely, that concern more directly the central tenets of Islam. He creates, as it were, a new moral and spiritual conception of taboo, and gives an ethical content to the very primitive idea of *ḥarām*, by placing 'under taboo' various manifestations of *kufṛ*.

Say, 'My Lord has only tabooed (*ḥarrama*) abominable deeds (*fawāḥish*, see p. 242ff.), whether outwardly visible or concealed within, and sin (*ithm*, see below, X, 2), and wrongful insolence (*baghy*, see above, p. 137), and that you associate (*tusharikū*) with God that for which He has sent down no warrant [i.e. idols], and that you say concerning God that which know not [i.e. the sin of *iftirā*], see above p. 94]. (VII, 31)

There is in Arabic another word for 'a tabooed thing' (= *ḥarām*), of which the Koran furnishes a few examples: *suḥt* (or *suḥut*). Speaking of the Jews 'who say: We believe, though in fact they have adopted *kufṛ*', God addresses Muhammad and says:

Thus seest many of them vying with one another in sin (*ithm*) and disobedience (*ʿudwān*), and how they devour the tabooed thing (*suḥt*): Verily, evil (*bi'sa*) is the thing they have been doing. (V, 67)

And in the same Surah, v. 46, the same Jews are called *akkālūn li-al-suḥt* 'voracious eaters of the tabooed thing'. As to what is exactly meant by the 'tabooed thing' here, nothing certain can be said, though it is highly probable that it refers to usury. We know that the prohibition of lending money at interest was directed primarily against the Jews (cf. Montgomery Watt: *Muhammad at Medina* p. 296-297). The following quotation from the Koran will confirm this view.



For the wrong-doing (*ẓulm*) of the Jews, We have put under taboo (*ḥarramnā*) certain good things (*ṭayyibāt*) that were before permitted to them. [This has occurred] also for their debarring many man from the way of God, and for their taking usury in disregard of the strict prohibition [by God]. (IV, 158-159)

Concerning *ḥalāl* there is semantically very little to say. It denotes anything that is not 'taboo', or rather, anything from which the ban has been removed. A few examples may suffice.

O men, eat of what is in the earth, things lawful (*ḥalāl*), good (*ṭayyib*) [note again the combination, *ḥalāl*—*ṭayyib*], and follow not the footsteps of Satan. (II, 163)

A few verses down, the same thought is expressed again in a somewhat different way: this time, it is the word *ṭayyibāt* that appears in place of the combination *ḥalāl*—*ṭayyib*:

O believers, eat of the good things (*ṭayyibāt*) wherewith We have provided you, and thank God, if it is Him that you worship. (II, 167)

All food was lawful (*ḥill*=*ḥalāl*) to the children of Israel save what Israel made unlawful (*ḥarrama* 'tabooed') to himself, before the Law was revealed. (III, 87)

The next example concerns the relation between husband and his divorced wife. It is contextually implied that violation of a taboo-ban constitutes a 'sin' which is called *junāḥ*. This latter word will come up for consideration in the next section.

If he [i.e. the husband] divorces her [the third time, that is, finally], she shall not be *ḥalāl* (*taḥillu*, verb) to him thereafter, until she marries another husband. Then, if he [the new husband] divorces her, then it is no sin (*junāḥ*) for them to come together again. (II, 230)

As I have suggested before, whenever, in primitive society, a taboo is placed upon a thing, that thing becomes raised above the level of ordinary existence: it becomes 'sacred' in the original double meaning of purity and pollution; it is 'untouchable'. This latter aspect of tabooed things is expressed in the Koran by the word *rijs*, which is an exceedingly powerful word with the basic meaning of 'filthiness' or

'uncleanness'. It suggests a feeling of intense physical repulsion; a *rijs* is something physically repugnant on account of its stinking dirtiness.

The fundamental semantic connection between *ḥarām* and *rijs* will be best perceived in the following verse, which gives a list of tabooed food for the Muslims. Here the 'filthiness' is given explicitly as the reason for the prohibition of the flesh of swine:

Say, 'I find in what has been revealed to me naught tabooed except what is dead [of itself, i.e. not slaughtered], and blood outpoured, and the flesh of swine—for that is a *rijs*—and all *fisq*-things that have been consecrated to other than God.'

In another passage, we find wine, *maisir* (a form of gambling practised by means of arrows), idols, and divining-arrows strictly prohibited as being 'unclean'.

O believers, wine and *maisir*-gambling, idols and divining-arrows are all *rijs* coming from Satan's work. So avoid them that haply you may prosper. (V, 92)

We should further compare this passage with Surah II, v. 216, where wine and *maisir* are condemned as involving great 'sin' (*ithm*):

They will ask thee [Muhammad] about wine and *maisir*. Say, 'In both of them there is great sin and also some uses for men, but their sin is greater than their usefulness.' (II, 216)

In another place idols are called *rijs*:

Shun the abomination (*rijs*) of idols. (XXII, 31)

And this is extended to the 'disease' which is in the hearts of the *kāfirs*:

As for those in whose hearts is disease, it [i.e. Revelation] only serves to add *rijs* to their *rijs*, and they all die *kāfirs*: (IX, 126)

And finally, the *kāfirs* themselves are called *rijs*.

Turn aside from them, for they are unclean (*rijs*), and their ultimate abode is Gehenna as the reward for what they have earned. (IX, 96)

I should like to end this section by drawing attention to another word, *najas*,

which is an exact synonym of *rijs*. This word is used in the Koran in reference to the idol-worshippers, who should not be allowed to come near the Holy (*ḥarām*) Mosque, because 'they are unclean'.

O believers, the polytheists (*mushrikūna*, lit. 'those who associate') are naught but *najās*. So let them not come near the Holy Mosque after this very year. (IX, 28)

It is related that 'Umar, who was to become the second Caliph, once wished to read the manuscript of a certain Surah which his sister Fāṭimah was reading with her husband. (This occurred a little before 'Umar became a Muslim). Fāṭimah, who was already a devout believer at that time, refused to hand the sheet to her brother and said, 'Brother, you are unclean (*najīs*, adj.) because of your polytheism (*shirk*). Only the clean (*ṭāhir*, meaning 'ritually clean') may touch it. Thereupon, we are told, Umar rose and washed himself clean, and then only she gave him the sheet (Ibn Ishāq, I, 226). This anecdote reveals better than anything else the nature of the taboo-consciousness in which these notions of 'cleanness' and 'uncleanness' originate and to which they properly belong.

## X SINS AND CRIMES

In this section I shall deal very briefly of those words that are ordinarily translated by 'sin' or 'crime'. It goes without saying that this is largely a matter of convenience. Some of the terms that we have treated in the preceding section, such as *sayyi'ah* and *fahshā*, might as well be discussed here inasmuch as they present an action as a violation of the moral and divine law and, consequently, as something punishable by a heavy penalty in both this world and the world to come.

### (1) DHANB

The Koran applies this word most frequently to heinous sins committed against God. Examples will best explain this point.

#### (a) *Takdhīb* is a *dhanb*:

They shall be fuel for the Fire, like Pharaoh's people, and those before them; they cried lies to Our signs, and God seized them for their sins (*dhunūb*, pl.). (III, 9; also VIII, 56, XCI 15)

As we know very well, *takdhīb* 'crying lies to God's signs' is the most typical manifestation of *kufr*; as a matter of fact this latter word replaces the former in Surah VIII, 54, all other elements remaining almost exactly the same:

Like Pharaoh's people, and those before them; they disbelieved (*kafarū*) in God's signs, and God seized them for their sins (*dhunūb*). (VIII, 54)

#### (b) *Kufr* is a *dhanb*:

God seized them for their sins (*dhunūb*). ..... That was because their Apostles brought them clear signs, but they disbelieved (*kafarū*), so God seized them. (XL, 22-23)

They [i.e. the *kāfirs* in Gehenna] shall say, 'If only we had listened to [our Apostle] or had sense, we would not have become the fellows of the Blaze!' Thus they confess their sin. (LXVII, 10-11)

In this passage the word *kufr* itself does not appear, but the reference is clear. In the following one, *istikbār* 'getting big with pride' (see above, p. 132) takes the place of *kufr*, and is accused of being a *dhanb*:

And Korah, Pharaoh, and Haman! Moses come unto them with clear signs, but they grew proud (*istakbarū*) in the land. Yet they could not win the race. So We seized each one for his sin (*dhanb*); (XXIX, 38-39)

The most intimate connection existing between *kufr* and *dhanb* is shown also by the fact that the latter is regarded as entailing the punishment of the Fire in Gehenna:

God looks on His servants [i.e. believers] who say, 'Our Lord, we believe. Forgive Thou our sins (*dhunūb*) and keep us from the chastisement of the Fire'. (III, 14)

#### (c) *Dhanb* comprises *fāḥishah* and *ẓulm*:

God loves the good-doers (*muḥsinīna* from *aḥsana*, see above, p. 230) who, when they commit a *fāḥishah* or wrong (*ẓalamū*) themselves [for *ẓulm an-naḥs*, see p. 154], remember God, and ask forgiveness for their sins (*dhunūb*)—and who forgives sins save God?—and persevere not knowingly in what they did. (III, 129)

#### (d) *Dhanb* of *fāsiq* people:

If they turn away [from God's signs], then know that God wishes to smite them for a sin of theirs. Verily, many men are *fāsiq* [for *fisq*, see 145ff]. (V, 54)

(e) *Dhanb* and *sayyi'ah*:

Our Lord, we heard a caller calling unto belief, saying, 'Believe in your Lord!' And we believed. Our Lord, forgive Thou us our sins (*dhanūb*) and remit from us our evil deeds (*sayyi'āt*). (III, 191)

According to al-Baiḍāwī, the distinction between *dhanūb* and *sayyi'āt* is that the former denotes *kabā'ir* 'great (sins)' while the latter denotes *saghā'ir* 'small ones'. This interpretation fits in admirably well with what is suggested by another important passage (IV, 35) which I have already quoted (p. 235). There we saw God Himself declaring emphatically, 'If you avoid *kabā'ir* which are forbidden you, We will remit from you your evil deeds'. But it is probable that this interpretation was first suggested to the minds of the commentators by this latter passage itself.

(f) *Dhanb* and *khaṭi'ah*:

Thou, woman, ask forgiveness of thy sin (*dhanb*); verily, thou art of the sinners (*khaṭi'ina*, part. pl.). (XII, 29)

This is said by the Egyptian Governor to his wife who attempted, and failed, to seduce Joseph out of the right way. It is to be noted that here those who commit this kind of *dhanb* are called *khaṭi'ina* (lit. those who commit *khaṭi'ah*). This seems to suggest that *dhanb* and *khaṭi'ah* are roughly synonymous with each other. The word *khaṭi'ah* will be discussed a little later.

(2) *ITHM*

Concerning the basic meaning of this word different opinions have been offered by different scholars. *Muḥit al-Muḥit*, for instance, defines it as a violation of *ḥarām*, that is, doing what is not lawful. The commentator al-Baiḍāwī says: *ithm* is a *dhanb* that merits punishment (com. on XLIX, 12). According to others *ithm* is an unlawful deed committed intentionally, while *dhanb* can signify both what is intentional and what is unintentional. The diversity of opinion itself gives evidence that a precise definition of this word is almost an impossibility, its meaning being extremely vague and elusive beyond a certain limit. So we cannot hope to do better than examine this word at work in concrete contextual situations.

Now the first point to note regarding the actual use of *ithm* in the Koran is that the word appears remarkably often in the legislative portions of the Book. Thus, for instance, concerning the right way to take in commercial dealings on credit, it is said:

Conceal not the testimony, for whoso conceals it, verily his heart is sinful (*āthim*, part.). (II, 283)

The next example concerns the legal regulation touching the making of a testament.

Prescribed for you, when any of you is about to die, leaving behind wealth, he is to make testament .....

Whoso alters it after he has heard it, the sin (*ithm*) thereof is only upon those who alter it, ... But in case he fears, from the testator some declining (*janaf*, meaning 'declining or deviating' from the right course) or sin (*ithm*, meaning here contextually a wrong intention to deviate from the right course), and so makes up the matter between the parties, then it shall be no sin (*ithm*) for him [to alter the will he has heard]. (II, 177-178)

In a similar way, in a passage dealing with the qualifications of persons permissible to attend bequeathing as legal witnesses, *ithm* is declared to consist in their not bearing testimony equitably. The following is the formula of oath by which the witnesses should swear never to act unjustly.

We will not sell it for a price, even though it be on behalf of a near kinsman, nor will we hide the testimony of God, for then we would surely be of the sinful (*āthimīna*, part. pl.). (V, 105)

In the next example the act of bringing a false accusation against one's own wife for the purpose of taking back the sum of money that one has given her before, is said to constitute an 'open *ithm*'.

If you wish to exchange a wife for another, and you have given unto one of them [i. e. the one you are going to divorce] a large sum of money, take naught of it. What, will you take it by way of calumny and open sin (*ithm*)? (IV, 24)

That 'calumny' itself is also an *ithm* is shown by another verse relating to an entirely different sort of situation:

Those who hurt the believers, men and women, without their deserving it, such have laid upon themselves the guilt of calumny and open sin (*ithm*). (XXXIII, 58)

In the next example, *ithm* means the act of devouring the property of others unjustly:

Consume not your property among yourselves in vanity, nor seek to bribe by it the judges that you may devour knowingly a portion of the property of others with *ithm* [i. e. sinfully].

(II, 184; also IV, 112)

The second point to note about the use of the word *ithm* is that it is also used in connection with *ḥarām*. In other words, violation of a taboo constitutes an *ithm*. The following verse comes after the enumeration of forbidden food—carrion, swine-flesh, blood, and what has been consecrated to other than God:

But whoso is forced [by hunger into eating *ḥarām*, food], and not from insolence and not transgressing, it is no sin (*ithm*) for him. Verily, God is Forgiving, Merciful. (II, 168; also V, 5)

They will ask thee about wine and *maisir*. Say, 'In both of them there is great sin (*ithm*) and also some uses for men, but their sin is greater than their usefulness'. (II, 216)

This verse has been quoted and explained above (p 249). Thirdly, we may observe that the word *ithm* is applied also to various aspects of *kufṛ*, the greatest of all religious sins.

Let not those who disbelieve (*kafarū*) suppose that Our being indulgent towards them for a long time [i. e. the fact that we do not punish them at once for their *kufṛ*] is something good for them. We only grant them indulgence that they may increase in sin (*ithm*). (III, 172)

*Shirk* 'polytheism':

He who associates aught with God has surely forged (*iftarā* [y]) a great sin (*ithm*). (IV, 51)

*Iftirā al-kadhib* 'forgery of a lie':

Behold how they forge against God a lie. And that is enough for an obvious sin (*ithm*). (IV, 53)

It will be noteworthy in this connection that the infernal tree of Zaqqūm which, as we know, is the special food of the kāfirs in Gehenna is in a passage called 'the tree of the sinful (*athīm*)', showing indirectly that *athīm* means nothing other

than kāfir.

Verily the tree of Zaqqūm shall be the food of the *athīm*, like molten copper, boiling in their bellies like the boiling of hot water. (XLIV, 43-45)

*Ẓulm* and *ithm*:

I desire that thou mayest bear my sin (*ithm*) and thy sin (*ithm*), and become a fellow of the Fire, for that is the reward of the wrongdoers (*ẓālimīna*). (V, 31-32)

(3) *KHAṬĪ'AH*

That *khaṭī'ah* has roughly the same meaning as *ithm* is clearly shown by such an example as this:

Whoso, having committed a *khaṭī'ah* or an *ithm*, throws it upon the innocent, has burdened himself with calumny and an obvious sin (*ithm*). (IV, 112)

As usual, the commentators have tried to draw a dividing line between the two words. According to al-Baiḍāwī, for instance, *khaṭī'ah* here means 'small' sin or an unintentional offence, and *ithm* means 'great' sin or an intentional crime. The actual fact of the Koranic language flatly contradicts such a distinction. For the Koran applies the word *khaṭī'ah* mainly to the most heinous religious sins. The examples that follow will bring out this point.

Noah said, 'My Lord, they have rebelled against me, and followed one whose wealth and children have increased him only in ruin, and they have plotted a mighty plot, and said, 'Do not forsake your gods.

Do not forsake Wadd, nor *Suwā'*, nor Yoghūth, nor Ya'ūq, nor Nasr.' And thus they have led many astray. Increase thou not these wrong-doers (*ẓālimīna*) save in straying.' Because of their sins (*khaṭī'āt*, pl.) they were drowned and made to enter into a Fire. (LXXI, 20-25)

Better than anything else this passage discloses the meaning content of the word in question. In the next one, *khāṭi* (part. meaning 'one who commits a *khaṭī'ah*') evidently replaces the more usual *kāfir*:

Take him, fetter him, then roast him in the Hell Fire, and then put him in a chain the length whereof is seventy cubits. Verily, he believed not in God the Great, and he urged not the feeding of the needy. So this day he has here no true friend, nor any food save putrid pus which none but the sinners (*khāfi'ūna*, pl.) eat. (LXIX, 30-37)

Here is one more example in which *KH-T'* evidently refers to the deeds of *kufr*:

And Pharaoh, and those before him, and the cities overturned, committed *khāfi'ah* (= *khaṭi'ah*), and they rebelled against the Apostle of their Lord. So He seized them with a vehement grip. (LXIX, 9-10).

In a passage, the Jāhili custom of slaying one's own children for fear of poverty is condemned as a great *khaṭ'* (= *khaṭi'ah*):

Slay not your children for fear of poverty. We will provide for them and for you. Verily, the slaying of them is a great sin (*khaṭ'*). (XVII, 33)

Here instead of *khaṭ'* words like *dhanb* and *ithm* might as well be used without causing any change in meaning. It is interesting to note in this connection that there is a verse in which *dhanb* and *KH-T'* are actually used side by side in reference to one and the same wrong-doing. It is found in the Chapter of Joseph, and the 'sin' referred to is the evil plot which Joseph's brothers framed against him when he was a little child and for which they are now repentant.

They [Joseph's brothers] said, 'O father, ask forgiveness of our sins (*dhunūb*) for us, for certainly we were sinful (*khāfi'īna*, part. pl.) (XII, 98)

I shall give one more example showing a close connection that exists between *KH-T'* and *sayyi'ah*.

They [i. e. the 'hypocrites'] say, 'The Fire will not touch us save for a number of days'. Say, '..... Nay, but whoso has done evil (*sayyi'ah*) and is surrounded on all sides by his sin (*khaṭi'ah*), such are the fellows of the Fire; therein they shall dwell for ever. (II, 74, 75)

#### (4) *JURM*

*Jurm* is admittedly a synonym of *dhanb*. In the Koran, the word appears mostly under the participial form, *mujrim*, meaning 'one who commits, or has committed, a *jurm*', and the ultimate referent is almost invariably *kufr*. A mere inspection of examples will make this point abundantly clear.

##### *Takdhīb* :

If they cry thee lies (*kadhhabū*), say, 'Your Lord is of all-embracing mercy, but His violence will not be turned back from the sinful (*mujrimīna*) people'. (VI, 148; also XII, 110)

##### *Istikbār* :

As for those who disbelieved (*kafarū*), [it will be said unto them on the Day of Judgment], 'were not My signs recited unto you? But you were too haughty (*istakbartum*), and were a sinful (*mujrimīna*) people. (XLV, 30)

Those who cry lies to Our signs and are too haughty (*istakbarū*) to accept them, for them the gates of Heaven shall not be opened. .... It is thus that We requite the sinners (*mujrimīna*); Gehenna shall be their couch, with coverings [of fire] above them. Thus do We requite the wrong-doers (*ẓālimīna*). (VII, 38-39)

The following passage describes in vividly concrete terms the characteristic arrogance of the *mujrim* people towards the believers.

Behold, those who commit *jurm* (*alladhīna ajramū*) used to laugh at those who believed, winking one at another when they passed them by, and when they went back to their own folk, they returned jesting, and when they saw them they used to say, 'Lo, these are indeed astray!' (LXXXIII, 29-30)

##### *Nifāq* :

Make no excuse. You [*munāfiqūna* 'hypocrites'] have disbelieved after your faith. If We forgive one sect of you, We will chastise another sect for that they were sinners (*mujrimūna*) (IX, 67)

##### *Iftirā' al-kadhib* :

Who does greater wrong (*aẓlam*) than he who forges against God a lie or cries lies to His signs? Verily, the sinners (*mujrimūna*)



shall not prosper.

(X, 18; also XI, 37)

Similar instances could be multiplied freely. But this much seems to suffice for our present purpose.

#### (5) *HARAJ* and *JUNĀH*

Both terms are roughly synonymous with *ithm*, and are most often used in the legislative portions of the Book. They seem to mean a sin or crime for which one deserves punishment.

##### *Junāh* :

It is no sin (*junāh*) chargeable upon you that you seek bounty from your Lord [i.e. that you seek to gain profits by trading during the period of Pilgrimage]. (II, 194)

That *junāh* here is synonymous with *ithm* may be seen from the fact that a few verses further on we find this very word, *ithm*, used in a similar contextual situation in place of *junāh* :

Remember God during a certain number of days [in the Pilgrimage], but whoso hastens off in two days, there is no sin (*ithm*) chargeable upon him, and whoso delays, there is no sin (*ithm*) chargeable upon him, if he fears [God]. (II, 199)

The word *junāh* appears very frequently in regulations touching marriage and divorce. One or two examples may suffice :

It is no sin (*junāh*) for you that you offer a proposal of marriage to women or keep it secret. (II, 235)

Thou [Muhammad] mayest put off whomsoever thou wilt of them [thy wives], and thou mayest take to thyself whomsoever thou wilt, and if thou seekest any of those whom thou hast divorced, it shall be no sin (*junāh*) for thee. (XXXIII, 51)

The next example concerns the curtailing of prayer in case of emergency :

When you go on your travel in the land, it is no sin (*junāh*) for you that you curtail your prayer in case you fear that the kāfirs may attack you. (IV, 102)

*Haraj* : It is no sin (*haraj*) for the weak and the sick and those who find naught to spend [that they do not go forth to war in God's way], if they are true to God and His Apostle. (IX, 92)

It is no sin (*haraj*) for the blind, nor is it sin for the lame, nor is it sin for the sick [that they stay behind]. (XLVIII, 17)

So We gave her [Zainab the wife of the Prophet's freedman and adopted son] in marriage unto thee [Muhammad], so that [henceforward] there should be no sin (*haraj*) for the believers [in general] in respect of [marrying] the wives of their own adopted sons. There is no sin (*haraj*) for the Prophet about what God has ordained for him. (XXXIII, 37-38)

(6) Other Words for 'sin' : There are still other words for 'sin' used sporadically in the Koran.

##### (a) *Hinth* :

The most usual meaning of this word is 'perjury' or the violation of an oath. The example found in the Koran means contextually the sin of *takdhīb* of, or the disbelief in, the central Islamic doctrine of Resurrection.

Verily, before this [i.e. in their earthly life] they lived in affluence, and persisted in the great sin (*hinth*), and they used to say, 'What, when we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we then indeed be raised again?' (LVI, 44-47)

##### (b) *Hūb* :

Give unto the orphans their property, and exchange not the vile for the good, nor devour their property with your property; verily, that would be a great sin (*hūb*). (IV, 2)

Here the context itself explains in concrete terms what is implied by the word *hūb*. It is clear that, so far at least as this single example is concerned the word is perfectly synonymous with *ithm* and *dhanb*.

##### (c) *Kabīr* and 'Azīm :

Both are adjectives meaning 'great' or 'big'. In some of the examples just quoted, we have seen them appearing in combination with *hinth* and *hūb*, like *hinth 'azīm* 'a great sin', *hūb kabīr* 'a great sin'.

Each of these adjectives can also be used by itself. As a matter of fact, I have already had occasion to talk about *kabir* in the sense of 'great sin' (see p. 235) and have given there a good example of it. Here is another interesting example:

They [the believers] question thee [Muhammad] of the sacred (*ḥarām* 'taboo') month, of warfare therein. Say, 'Fighting therein is a great (*kabir*) [sin], but to bar from the way of God, and to disbelieve in Him and the Holy Mosque, and to expel its people therefrom, is a greater (*akbar*) [sin] in God's sight, and persecution [of the believers] is a greater [sin] than slaying.' (II, 214)

As for '*aẓīm*', the actual Koranic usage seems to suggest that it is used rather as an emotive term meaning not so much 'sin' as 'an extraordinary, monstrous thing'; it is a very strong expression of reproach and surprise.

It is not for you [believers] ..... to marry his [i. e., the Prophet's] wives after him. That surely would be an enormity ('*aẓīm*') in God's sight. (XXXIII, 53)

In Surah XXIV, 14, the calumny against one of the Prophet's favorite wives is called '*aẓīm*'. In the next example, the word behaves as an epithet qualifying *qaul* 'speech'.

What, has your Lord favored you with sons and has chosen for Himself females from among the angels [alluding to the pagan thought that some of the goddesses are 'daughters' of God]? Verily you speak a monstrous ('*aẓīm*') speech! (XVII, 42)

The word '*aẓīm*' in this sense has, again, a few synonyms.

*Idd*, meaning a 'wonderful thing' i. e. an 'extremely abominable thing':

They [the *kāfirs*] say, 'The Merciful has taken unto Himself a son'. You have indeed uttered something monstrous (*idd*)! (XIX, 91)

*Fariy*, meaning 'great', 'extraordinary':

She [Mary] brought it [i. e. the baby, Jesus] to her folk, carrying it, and they said, 'O Mary, thou has done a monstrous (*fariy*) thing!' (XIX, 28)

*Imr* :

What, hast thou made a hole in it [the ship] so as to drown the passengers? Thou hast indeed done an abominable (*imr*) thing! (XVIII, 70)

## Chapter XIV

### CONCLUSION

In the five preceding chapters I have examined the most important of the Koranic ethical terms, by analyzing them semantically in their concrete contextual situations. As I remarked at the outset of this book, I understand by 'ethical (or moral) terms' those words whose specific job is to comment upon and evaluate human conduct or character. It is now time to examine the upshot of all these considerations.

Instead, however, of merely summing up the results we have reached and giving a synopsis of the Koranic moral ideas, I should rather like to concentrate upon a problem which, to my mind, is of particular relevance to the general theory of ethical terms. The point I have in mind relates to the methodology of semantic analysis itself. One of the chief lessons to be learned from the previous discussions is, I think, that, if we are to deal adequately with the ethical terms of any language, we have to draw a distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' levels in moral vocabulary. By 'primary' ethical terms I mean ordinary descriptive words, denoting concrete factual properties, that are normally used with more or less serious ethical import (e.g. 'humble', 'thankless'). By 'secondary' ethical terms I understand words whose primary function is classificatory rather than descriptive. These are chiefly employed for classifying various descriptive properties denoted by descriptive words (such as 'humbleness' and 'thankfulness') as belonging in this or that of the recognized classes of moral value (e.g. 'good', 'bad'). When, for example, we call a man 'good' by virtue of his having a set of characters generally designated by the word 'humble', we have thereby ranged 'humbleness' into the class of praiseworthy qualities. In this sense secondary ethical terms may also justly be called ethical metalanguage, and the distinction between these two levels of ethical language would roughly answer to the logician's distinction between object-words and logical words.

Now, viewed from this standpoint, the Koranic language does not seem to possess a well-developed system of authentic ethical terms of the secondary level. And this, I think, is what scholars generally refer to by saying that there was no 'abstract' conception of good and bad in the Koranic outlook. The point will become much clearer if we cast a cursory glance at the list of the so-called five categories of acts developed by the *fiqh*-scholars of later ages.

- (1) *wājib*, 'obligatory' — the duties prescribed by the Koran, neglect of which is punishable by law;
- (2) *mandūb*, 'recommended' — duties recommended but not obligatory,

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fulfilment of which is rewarded, but neglect of which is not necessarily punishable.

- (3) *jā'iz*, 'indifferent' — actions that may be done and may not be done;
- (4) *makrūh*, 'disapproved' — actions disapproved but not forbidden;
- (5) *ḥarām*, 'prohibited' — actions punishable by law.

These five terms for the categories of the believers' acts may be said to represent genuine secondary ethical terms in Islam. Here is an elaborate system of metalanguage in which any act has its own place and is evaluated with reference to a fixed standard of good and bad. As is evident, the role of these terms is not to describe concrete properties; it consists in classing all deeds as belonging to this or that of the five categories of ethical value. Such a system of well-developed secondary ethical terms is not to be found in the Koran.

By this I do not in any way mean to assert that the Koranic ethics has nothing at all to do with ethical metalanguage. Sporadically there are in the Koran words that must be regarded as being more evaluative than descriptive. Most, if not all, of the terms treated in Chapter XIII under the title of 'Good and Bad', do behave, at least in some of their uses, almost as genuine secondary terms. Words like *khair* and *sharr* for good and bad, for example, or words meaning 'sin' such as *dhanb* and *ithm*, are in a certain sense classificatory both in nature and function rather than purely descriptive. The important point to note about them, however, is that they are too sporadic to form a whole system of moral ideas.

The real mechanism of the Koranic moral code evidently works on the level of primary ethical terms. These are all, as has been said above, descriptive words used for conveying information of a factual character. But unlike ordinary descriptive words such as 'red', 'eat' and 'house' etc., they have, over and above their descriptive or factual content, what may justly be called 'evaluative' content; they are, in brief, descriptive words charged with an ethical or evaluative force.

Take, for example, the word *kufr* which is, as we know, one of the most important moral terms in the Koran. The word means the attitude of ungratefulness towards favors and benefits received. As such, it is a genuine descriptive word having a concrete factual content. At the same time, however, it is clear that the word is invested, so to speak, with an evaluative aura which surrounds it and makes it more than mere description. And it is this evaluative 'aura' or 'halo' hovering around the descriptive core of its meaning that makes *kufr* an authentic 'ethical' term on the primary level. A comparison of this word with some other word, say *dhanb*, belonging rather to the level of metalanguage will at once confirm my view.

*Dhanb*, as I have shown in the foregoing chapter, mostly denotes the same thing as *kufr*. Both may refer ultimately to the same state of affairs, but they refer to the same thing in two characteristically different ways. While *kufr* conveys,

primarily, factual information about the occurrence of a case of ungratefulness or disbelief, and, only secondarily, suggests that it is bad, i. e. that the case is to be ranged into the class of negative or reprehensible properties, *dhanb* primarily condemns it as belonging in this very class. In the former, the evaluative force is but an 'aura', but in the second it is evaluation itself that constitutes the semantic core of the word.

Thus, in the semantic behavior of the primary ethical terms we have to isolate two different layers: descriptive and evaluative. True, as a matter of actual fact these two layers of meaning are fused together into a semantic whole, but it is theoretically possible and even necessary to draw a dividing line between them. To understand this point, it would be enough to recall what was said in Chap. VI concerning such ideas as 'trembling fear', 'humbleness', and 'self-surrender'. These were all in the days of Jahiliyyah nothing but manifestations of the baseness of character. With the advent of Islam, they were raised to the honor of the highest virtues. The words denoting these properties completely changed their value. This means that the descriptive layer of their meaning remained the same, but their evaluative force changed from positive to negative. From this we see that the development of a secondary ethical term means in general the gradual formation of a specific term whose primary job consists in indicating whether a certain sort of character or act denoted by a certain word belongs to the positive or negative sphere of evaluation.

It may be objected that the level of object-language and that of metalanguage in ethical matters are not separated by a clear line of demarcation, that it is extremely doubtful whether the two, if they do exist, are really so fundamentally different. This objection is well founded to a certain degree. We have to admit that as far as natural language is concerned, everything begins at the level of primary language. Even what I have called here the 'secondary' ethical terms must, in accordance with the universal rule of language development, originate in the sphere of ordinary descriptive words, to develop from there through a number of stages towards the ideal type of 'pure' value-words. So, in a sense, all difference between the two levels of ethical speech may be reduced ultimately to one of 'more or less'. But here, as elsewhere, difference in degree, when it goes beyond a certain limit, changes into a difference of kind. Thus, to speak more concretely, even such a representative ethical term of the secondary level as the English 'good' has still a descriptive aspect. Only, this descriptive aspect is with 'good' so trivial and insignificant as compared with its evaluative aspect that we can safely consider it an authentic member of ethical metalanguage.

'Pure' value-words of this type are very few and far between in the Koran. The Koranic moral code as a linguistic structure is mainly composed of a large number of primary ethical terms in the sense just explained, with a few half-developed secondary terms scattered here and there. And it is the former class of

words that plays the leading role in structuring the Koranic moral consciousness.

Can we go further and suggest the necessity of paying more attention than is usually done to the level of primary language in any empirical investigation of ethical terms in any language whatsoever? I think we can and must do so. In recent years a great deal of philosophical thought has been bestowed on the problems of ethical language, and much useful information upon the moral behaviors of men in various cultural spheres has been elicited. Unfortunately, to my mind, most of the learned writings in this field seem to be concerned too exclusively with secondary terms like 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong', giving too little attention to the tremendous importance of the primary terms in the working mechanism of ethics. Arguing just what is the meaning structure of 'good' in English, for example, may very well constitute in itself a big philosophical problem. But we should not forget that, however much we may pile up similar discussions on secondary moral terms in English, that alone could never come to elucidate the system of moral ideas actually at work among the people.

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